

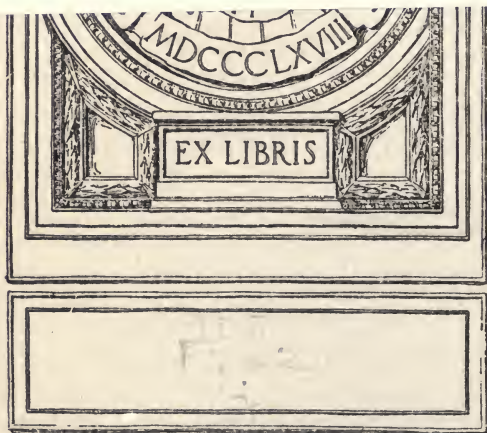
John Kendry's Idea



Chester Bailey Fernald

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JOHN KENDRY'S
IDEA



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JOHN KENDRY'S IDEA

by
Chester Bailey Fernald
Author of "The Cat and the Cherub"

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY C. D. WILLIAMS



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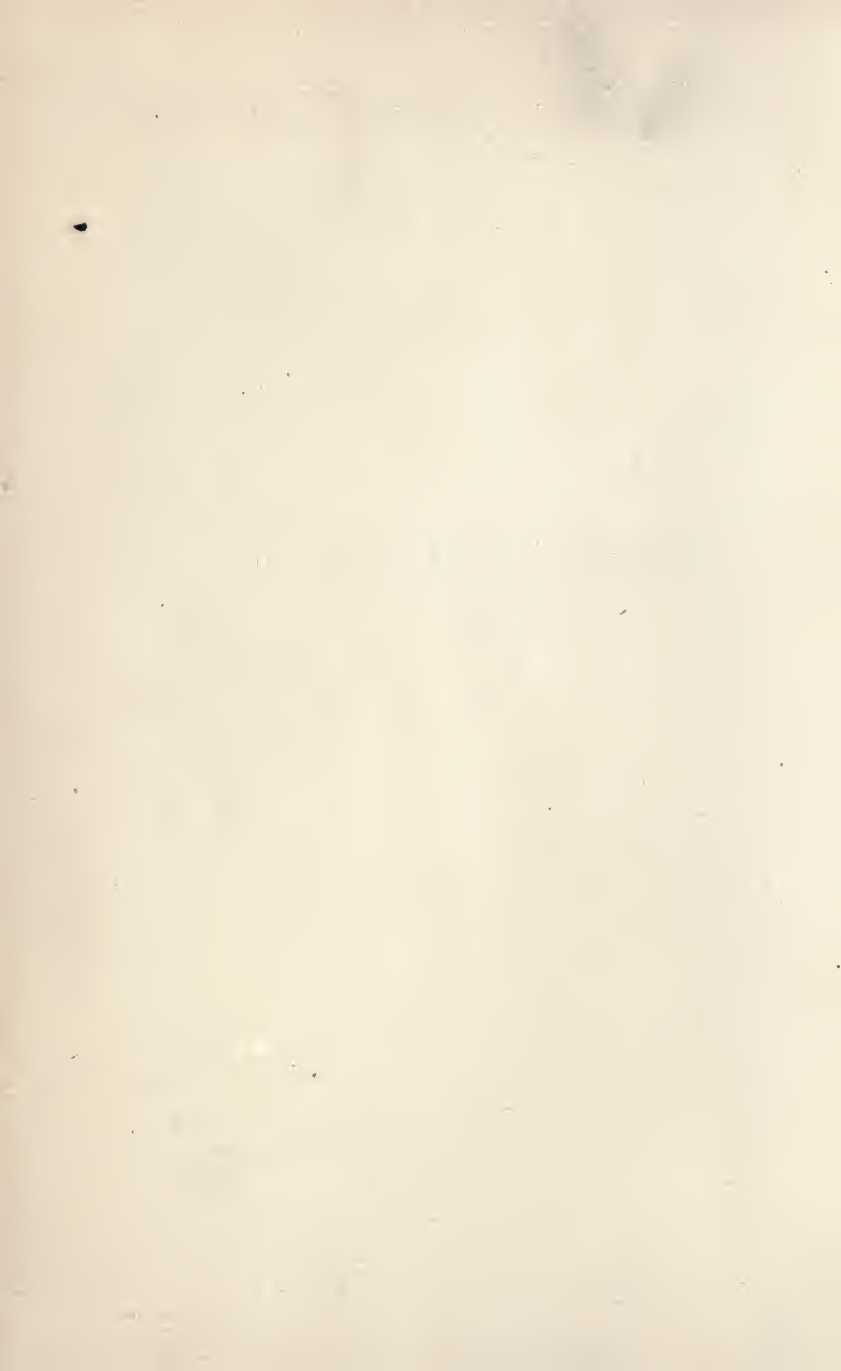
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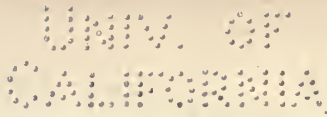
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JOHN KENDRY'S
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CHAPTER I

SOME FLAMES AND A FLAME

THE world will conform with reason when it ceases to conform with chance. Some irrelevant person had abandoned a liqueur bottle on a spur of the mountain halfway to the summit from the sea. Some other irrelevant person, happening there in the passing years had hurled the bottle against a boulder. Where the bottom section of it lodged unfractured amid the other fragments was a slope to southwestward covered with a clayey soil congenial to the oat. Farther up, a rounded oak spread its branches close to the ground; and farther down a green border of cascara and young laurel ran. The mountain top was hidden by an ascending brow to eastward. To westward, across the cañon depths, was the long and nearly even height whose yonder terrace footed in the sea. The round-topped hollow cone on the bottle bottom—indented in order that a gallon of liquid might fill six reputed quarts—lay surrounded by the jagged points of its glass walls. It lay pointed to a spot in the

heavens through which the sun passes twice a year in spring and autumn. For ten years this exhibit stayed undisturbed, the lens-like top of the cone converging the daylight into a small focus on the earth beneath it. The oat half buried there sprouted into the dome and died for lack of room. As the years went by the winds sifted bits of broken straw and silky down from plants into the space beneath the lens. But when the sun might have shone directly through the axis of the bottle it happened that for years either the ground lay rain saturated or a cloud covered the mountain. When, however, chance saw fit to use this mechanism for its effect upon the lives of several mortals it chose a day in early spring when against the custom of nature the ground was dry and the backward young blades of the oats had not yet topped the sere stalks of autumn. The air was warm in the sun and cool in the shade. A bright moistureless wind blew out of the north and huddled the tinder under the lens, through which, at a certain moment in the afternoon, the sun's rays, with a minimum of diffusion, shone gathered in a spot of white heat. The tinder turned black. A jack-rabbit bounded from the smell of smoke, his tall ears cocked. A thin red line crackled in a widening circle and made the ground-owl hide in his borrowed hole. Soon the oak stood unrelieved in a space of black, with a crisp fringe of straw-color about its lower branches. The bays shot up like flaming swords, roaring and pouring pungent smoke at an angle through the flaw-

less air to southward. But the scrub oaks and the cascara, less oily and full of watery sap, refused passage to the flame. The time was not yet when the long dry heat of the rainless season made them easy prey. The fire died away beyond the bays. It left a wide, irregular patch of charred remains on the abused slope, waiting for the rains to bring it quickly back to verdure.

A young man on a trail higher than this had caught the sight of the smoke and had rushed across a rough stretch of stones dotted with cypress for a better view. His anxious thought had been for the ancient redwoods down in the cañons.

Now he was on his back beneath a wind-blown cypress. He had not gone far from the trail. There was a red abrasion on his temple and he lay white and still.

He wore fawn-colored corduroy trousers folded into boots that came half way to his knees. In a girl of twenty, wondering whether he would ever speak again, this first encounter with him must have aroused a certain respect and touched a sympathetic chord of youth. She noticed the shapeliness of his hands, which began to twitch and enliven her hopes. For him indefinite forms were beginning to shift before his closed eyes. A web was drawing across his consciousness, passing with points of light and spaces of darkness, to the hard pumping of his arteries. He made a sound of bodily and of mental distress. The elements of sky and stone and foliage entered con-

fusedly into his parted lids. The faint scent of all the sun-warmed weeds crept into his senses; the line of the distant ridge and its points of solitary upstanding trees arranged themselves with greater sharpness. But his eyes stayed dim as to the space immediately before him, where lines and tones were intercepted by a khaki-colored patch, brighter than the dried grass, yet without the form and texture of landscape. It rose inexplicably out of the same resilient manzanita that supported his own head; it curved in agreeable symmetry to a narrower, darker band, then curved out again in vaguer folds that suggested something round and definite within. These folds were not motionless, but regularly rose and fell. A crimson kerchief was above the moving space. A bush-tit twittered in the silence of the cypress branches and caused him to look up into a pair of questioning blue eyes.

They were restful, like some deep unruffled pool reflecting the sky. He was dully willing to be refreshed by them. The air had become motionless; the girl was kneeling and the disk of the low sun was behind her head, glistening through the edges of her hair. Something echoed in his ears: a voice. It was a voice full, even, cool like the air after a rain. He could not recall the words; they did not matter. She must have spoken long ago.

"Yes," he heard himself say. Her lashes widened and showed the clear white spaces above the irises. She leaned back with a sigh of relief.

"Thank you!" he was moved to say to this. Then her lips parted and her eyelids rose again at the sight of his black anger oversweeping him. "I was knocked down!" he dug his palm into the gravel. "The fellow hid his face behind his hat. I had no suspicion! Where is he?"

The girl shook her head. "I've been here a long time," she said. Her look of uncertainty lingered; she was not unlike a doe, fascinated by some new object that disturbed her. But to him, who sank back suffering the vividder memory of his ambushment, only her voice became a distant quantity to his retreating consciousness. The cypress whirled in the sky and his elbow yielded to his weight. He felt a canteen at his lips while her fingers held his head. The brandy tore his throat.

"A man ought to slink like a beast, expecting to be murdered," he panted. "You don't know where he went?"

She held his shoulder down. "You must lie still," she said. She sat staring at him, as before. He let her voice take possession of his will, while he returned her gaze. His heart began to regain some rhythm; his harsher emotions began to melt in his pleasure at the young perfection of her skin, her teeth, her hair.

"I don't object to lying still," he faintly said.

Her gaze did not falter; but she turned away to the ridge beyond the cañon, without having matched

his smile. Her head was bare; her sleeves were rolled to the elbow; her skin was translucently browned. He noticed these things while his anger reverberated at the back of his thoughts. She was not taking him for granted. He wondered why.

"Do you love this mountain?" he said. "Does it mean a great lot of things to you?" She came back from the skyline, her cool face brightening.

"Why doesn't it to you?" she said.

"But it does!" he marveled. "It's my mother. It's my place of refuge from all the unpleasantness in the world—or, I thought it was until—" he bolted up: "if you don't mind my saying that you are a compensation for being sandbagged?" he said gravely. Her mouth stirred, but she made no acknowledgment.

"Have you a mother," she said, "who isn't a mountain of refuge?"

Kendry shook his head.

"She's dead," he said. "Is yours?"

She shook her head likewise, while they gazed unabashedly at each other. "Why do you think I don't love the mountain?" he demanded.

She flushed, but came back at him with directness. "I didn't suppose," she said, "that private detectives came from preference to places like this."

"Private detectives!" He started up with a suddenness that made his head spin. "Oho! You think I'm a private detective?" Her look wavered, then returned accusatively. "Extraordinary!" he frowned,

with his hand to his brow. "I didn't dream that I resembled one's idea of a private detective."

"They generally try not to, don't they?" she said, without altering.

She saw his amazement cloud with returning faintness. He sank back and she came with the canteen.

"Not a detective!" he murmured, face down. He was long silent; the brandy seemed in vain. He lay motionless while she looked upon him, undecided, unsatisfied, yet compassionate and, presently, with a sudden pallor. The blue ether was too brilliantly lighted; the broken stones, half fresh, half oxidized, were too vivid green and pink in the slant beyond them; the dash and dip of the birds from bough to cañon, the savor of the living trees—all were little in keeping with his ashen face. She thought his heart had stopped beating. Her look went over the bright unpeopled surface of the land. She yielded to the moment, without thinking. He saw her eyes through her tears. He closed his own again.

"You must eat something," she said, clearing her throat. "I ought to have thought of that." Yet again, while he dutifully ate her bread and cheese, a better color began to warm him, he vaguely felt her bearing alter, through something more than a girl's constraint in a chance acquaintanceship, to a deeper distrust of him.

"I'll tell you what I am, though," he proffered. "Everybody ought to be willing to tell that. My name

is Kendry—John Kendry. I was born not far from this mountain. But I've lived away, off and on. I've been traveling, trying to get my perspective. I came up here to think: to hammer all my experiences into some kind of plan for a career. It's a handful!" he laughed. His so frankly plunging in perhaps made him seem to seek an effect on her. "Of course, most people are forced along into something; but I had a lot of money left me, and that gave me a free choice—and that's the trouble." He mused on, as if in a fair way to forget her. Suddenly he sat up. "I think I have it! It's been muddling about my head for a long time, and that fellow's knocked it into shape."

She did not ask the question that would have proved her interest and her acceptance of this confidence. She leaned against the low bough of the cypress, her head obscured in its foliage. He stared at the lines of her waist flowing in their natural course without the lacing that solicits the idea of femininity and diminishes its purer charm. The fact stood to him for a point of view flattering to his own. He clasped his hands more comfortably behind his head, with a lock of hair pulled down over his wound.

"Over there," he waved toward the city, "most of the people I know are trying to get richer. Not so much for the money, but because it's the only game they know—the only one they think there is. They are like ants: they are dreadfully busy and organized; but they haven't the least idea as to what it's all

about; they are too satisfied to be able to evolve. For myself, I want to move in more dimensions. I want to be a conscious evolver—does that sound wordy?" he smiled.

The girl was seated on the bough; she gravely shook her head from her receptive silence. His audience pleased him; he resumed with gravity:

"Of course I shall go through most of my father's experiences in life; but at least in one dimension, I want to begin where he left off. I want to take something he brought to me and carry it forward and deliver it in improved condition to some other chap by the same family name. That ought to be good sport—a sort of egg and spoon race," he interrupted irreverently, "with an evergreen egg. That over there," he waved to the city, "strikes me as I think it must strike the mountain. If you sat here a thousand years and saw the web of time drawn by you'd begin to distinguish between the woof and the warp. All these ants, that scuttle horizontally from one edge of the web to the other, with a visible beginning and end—they'd be woofs; and all the people with developed souls and with the wish and capacity for growing toward infinity—they'd be warps. Is this getting too thick for your taste?" he sympathetically paused.

Her eyes widened; she shook her head. "Well," said Kendry, with an agreeable sigh, "I don't think there's any fun in being a woof; and I do think it would be immense to be a warp."

He made it a period for her. She was leisurely; her foot swung once.

"How shall you be a warp?" she said. He pondered.

"You see, a lady warp is born; she simply grows. But a man warp has to make himself; he has to prove to himself that he is a warp—and that's the trouble. I told my idea to an old miser yesterday. He's a son of the wild hyena—the kind that's born starving and eats off his brother's tail and gets to be the Grand Plutocrat. He grew quite tender with me: said I was perhaps just recovering from the measles. He asked me what I was going to do about it. He's a woof!" Kendry offered for her confirmation. Her foot swung slowly twice again.

"What are you going to do?" she suffered herself to say. Now he got her profile sharply cut against the northern tones of the sky. He studied her for a moment.

"Something big," he was easily able to say, with his eyes on her. "I may get myself into a position of trust with the people—a position where I can sell them out for millions—and then stay honest instead. Or I may go gunning after the criminal rich. To my mind that's the truest sport there is, for a gentleman living under a republic. It's much more difficult and dangerous than tigers. Anyway, I'm going to do something big," he glowed, with youth's vagueness. "Instead of being a rich hand to mouth woof I am

going to live with the constant knowledge of being a conscious part of the—the whole Continuous Performance,” he waved at the sky and waters, with a grin.

He waited her verdict while she gazed thoughtfully across his shoulder at the sharp shadows of the rocks.

“How shall you begin?”

“That’s what the wild hyena said,” Kendry nodded. “Couldn’t answer him yesterday, but I can now. Yesterday I hadn’t been thumped in the noddle by this other woof,” he waved at the hidden places of the woods. “And I hadn’t been put together again by a very kind queen of warps,” he added mischievously.

She flushed and made herself look up at the tree top. Kendry turned to where he imagined his assailant had fled. “I’d like to meet that woof again, though,” he hardened, with a distending of the veins of his forehead. The girl responded more quickly.

“You’d recognize him if you saw him?”

“I can put him in his class without recognizing him,” said Kendry. “He works for the wild hyena, but he doesn’t know it. He’s the saloon element; he’s the floating vote, the jail, the morgue, the scareheads in the newspapers. He’s the enemy, he’s the hope of the monarchs who want to see us handed over to the Grand Plutocrat. That dates back to my last thesis at college—don’t be alarmed,” said Kendry. “But it’s true. Of course he’s the chap to round out my

idea. I ought to thank him; but I shall not," he appealed to her ominously.

The girl was avoiding him. What might be a return of her first suspicion brought her eyelids nearer together. He wondered if he had grown tiresome.

"If you think my mind is wandering," he said, "it all comes to this: The acts of a warp must tend to improve himself by giving a lift to civilization; and my new inspiration is that I will begin at once, like a force of nature, on the very nearest thing that needs me, even if it's you," he irresponsibly interjected. She brought her shoulder blades a little together and surveyed him neutrally. "But of course not unless you were pursued by an evil woof," he hastened. "That's the whole story," he smiled.

For this he received something steadier than a casual glance, followed by the girl's resuming her contemplation of the green depths of the cañon. He became aware that for some reason he was no longer succeeding with her. He noticed the fineness of her nose, of the poise of her head. Her hair was the color of sunlight through rich amber. Only the satisfaction of examining her while she gave him this full opportunity sufficed for the touch she was laying on his pride. "I'm deeply obliged for the brandy," he said pleasantly, his voice drawing off a shade. She rather penetratingly eyed him for a moment; but she did not answer. He pulled himself up on his stiffened legs.

"I am really keeping you," he remembered. "I'm quite able to go on to the summit." He willingly sat back on a rock, while he tried to look vigorous. "Do you go my way?"

"When you are stronger." She calmly surveyed him. She kept her seat and returned her attention to the seaward ridge. It was early in the season for a sea fog; but the white bank had begun to peep from behind, preparing for an assault upon the evening slopes to landward. To landward all was smiling and clear; but from the west the mist would soon begin to spill down over the summits of the first cañon and up the slope where Kendry waited. The sun approached the edge of the fog's cottony border. It shone directly behind her head once more, giving metallic luster to the threads of her hair and recalling the moment when first she had loomed upon his senses. The birds were flying in straighter, wider courses. The two human shadows lengthened in altered hues over the stones. The young woman who chose to be so uncommunicative still seemed willing that the mist should hide them together on a lonely mountainside. They were two hours' walk from a habitation. His own silence, his increasing mystification, did not disturb her; nor did the sight of the sun dipping into the crimsoned fog.

He buttoned his coat against the rapid cooling of the air. It was a moment comfortably to dwell on the other consideration of equal importance for him with

his own career. Mary Eastwood and her mother would have thought to find him anticipating their arrival at the tavern on the summit. Such an eagerness on his part he believed would have counted to her summers of seniority as a striking quality of his comparative youth. She would find that he had changed in the intervening two years. The place in his life to which he had assigned Mary Eastwood without, as yet, her sanction, she would find preserved for her, but adjusted within maturer bounds. He would come at a man's gait, with reasonable regard for the interesting phenomena by the wayside. The girl whose averted face took on a wistfulness in the softening light beneath the cypress was of capital interest. Beneath her the redwood spires on the seaward slopes were sinking in the mist. The first thin vapors blew across her cheek and vanished as if her warm blood dispelled them. To eastward sky and land and water stood clear in the evening light; to westward all the forms receded into thinner planes and vaguer distances. The fresh wind blew with a faint savor of the ocean, sweeping the mist across the dulled stones and through the trees.

"Could you find your way now?" she said, jumping down. "I don't think you could," she answered for him. Immediately she led off toward the beaten path.

In the silence she seemed to suggest, he followed, dwelling on the straightness, the completeness of her

figure. The gloom was beginning to make it dimmer. The trail wound off through the tall chaparral. He saw her snatch off occasional branchlets and crumple the leaves to her nostrils, while she kept the pace of their Indian file at something slower than he thought her wont. When they passed around into the shadow of a height which he calculated was about an hour and a half from the summit all behind and below them had been swallowed in the mist, which was pierced by tree tops and by eminences gradually sinking. It was like some dissolving view of wooded isles and far dim shores soon to give place to barren sea. They would soon have left the level stretch and started their climb. The girl's movement was faster. She had not spoken. Kendry marveled. Why did she carry a canteen of brandy? Why had she so obviously awaited the fog? It was growing difficult to keep her shadowy figure within sight around the turns without running into prickly foliage on either side.

"We are going down," he discovered. "Are we on the wrong trail?"

"You'd have preferred the other?" he heard her sweetly say, over her shoulder. Her answer seemed reassuring. Even should he return to the open spaces and perhaps to the other trails they had passed he doubted if he could find the one he had counted on. He tried to make up the gap his hesitancy had widened between them and he was startled by the speed of her descent. Their direction, he began to be certain, was

away from the summit. The decline was continuous. Despite his efforts she was drawing away.

It did not occur to him to judge his position by the facts, throwing out his prejudice in favor of so fresh and charming a young woman. He might have recalled one or two chance alluring women in other parts of the world, to whose guidance he would have been too well informed to trust himself in the blind darkness of a mountainside where for some unaccountable reason already he had been ambushed. But stumbling after her, his hands stretched out in the darkness before him, his feet sliding on the loose stones, he reflected merely that she had shown an inexplicable suspicion of him. Now perhaps she wished to be rid of him. A rolling stone brought him down heavily on his side against the stock of a scrub oak. He lay still and could not hear her. Only a dim difference between the space overhead and the walls of the chaparral indicated the direction of the trail. It turned sharply a little ahead. Either she waited without stirring or she had gone too far in advance to hear him fall. The trail now curved back toward his proper destination. He groped along it, eyes and ears alert. The shades and dim outlinings of the bushes took strange forms that thinned to nothing at approach. The big owl hooted from a far tree top; all the rest was stillness like that of a land covered with snow. The fine particles of the mist wafted now and then against his cheek, as if stirred by hidden knowing agencies.

A few feet on either side his sight was lost in the gray tenuous region of uncertainty into which the girl seemed vanished. He moved softly, pausing, a smile upon his lips. A long time appeared to elapse. His fingers pressed into the soft figure of the girl, so that he started back and brought down a shower of moisture upon them from the shrub under which she stood.

"You were listening? You thought you heard something?" her voice came.

"No!" he puzzled. He distinguished an uncertainty in her breathing, and then the note of preparation.

"You can't lose your way on this trail," she pronounced. "You'll be there in two hours." Her intonation stiffened for the speech she had arranged. "I shall never know whether you are—not unusually clever!" she finished, with a little laugh, not at ease. "Good night!"

He could not note in the moment all the wavering of purpose she had flattened out of this accusing speech. He heard her moving away. His quick impulse was not to follow her, not to answer. But he heard her steps slowing—nearly ceasing.

"I'm not so sure but that I've been the more genuine," he said gently.

He heard her pluck a leaf from a young laurel.

"I've left the canteen for you," she called.

Rushing after her his foot struck the canteen, but he came against nothing more. Somewhere he heard

the bushes crashing, on the slope below the trail. But he could find no opening through the stiff growth there. The sound of the parted chaparral diminished and stopped. There was nothing to see and nothing to hear.

CHAPTER II

IN THE MIST

NEVERTHELESS he held the canteen by the strap, still warm from her fingers. It was important enough to warrant him in seeking her out to return it; it was trivial enough to warrant the surprise she might show at his taking the trouble. It had the quality of "legal" tender in the transactions of women with men; that is, it had value, viewed from one side and was worthless when viewed from the other side—and it was the feminine prerogative to view it solely with the side up which best suited an occasion, or to hold it indefinitely balanced on its edge. He owned an instinct as to how best he could present such tender at its source for redemption. That would be with outward assumption of its worthlessness and with inward expectation of receiving at least another tender of equal ambiguity. He knew that if he presented it with the "good" side up it would be turned over and looked upon from the other side.

It bade him continue without further search for her. If he was mistaken and a purely impersonal compassion had prompted the gift of the stimulant, then his pursuit of her through the bramble, even if he caught

her, would yield his interest nothing more. If the canteen was a tender of good will, some lapse of time would not diminish its significance.

The trail wound from the inner slopes of a ravine to the descending ridge that marked its outer edge. Here the vegetation, rooted in thinner soil, was too low to add gloom to the gray obscurity. It gave a feeling of open space which he paused to enjoy. The mist was even and still. He thought it showed at one point a more tenuous quality, as if a break in the fog existed beyond. He stepped down off the trail to satisfy himself. If there was a light glimmering there it was possible that he was on the wrong side of the mountain where the only houses he could remember lay scattered at its base; in which case the girl had started him, not toward the summit, but toward the sea. Yet, on the south side he should have heard the fog-horn moaning at the Gate and the warning signals of the ferryboats. Nothing broke the silence; but the luminosity increased as he went farther down. It might be from a candle or from a conflagration, so much the particles of the mist diffused the light. He more cautiously picked his way over barren intervals of shale, avoiding the crushing of the shrubs. A faint resinous odor began to be carried on the air. The light took on a yellow tinge and the dim shadows of redwoods rose into the line of his softly descending vision. The shadows enlarged and deepened. The crackle of a fire came to his ears, along with a voice.

It was a man's voice, familiar not because it belonged to an individual, but because it belonged to a type of the multitude. It carried him back to the moment when, with his ears attuned to foreign ways and foreign accents, he had stepped down the gangplank at New York into the longing arms of porters and cabmen. Perhaps the voice best would be described by saying that many of his countrymen would not have understood what was being said by any one who attempted to describe it; for it was a voice without self-consciousness or self-knowledge—perhaps the only thing left without those attributes in a land where every one so closely examines himself with a view to betterment. It was in this case differentiated by a grieved insistence, an injured argumentativeness; but it still told him nothing within wide limits, of the breeding, the education, relative to the mass, of its owner. Kendry advanced to where he could hear the words. The proximity of a man sent throbbing the scar on his forehead.

The voice ceased. Perhaps Kendry had been heard crunching the stones. When the hidden conversation resumed it was from another voice, smooth and clear across the silence.

"If you've done nothing against the law, why do you hide here?" said the girl.

"The law! I was wishing I had the Revised Statutes to start this blaze with!" the man laughed. "You're 'the people'; you're easy! You'd sit down

under the statue of Justice and get your pocket picked. Did you ever notice that Justice was blind? Well, she's paralyzed too. All she can do is to throw a fit now and then and bite the man nearest. That's on 'page one'!" he finished.

The girl made no answer. "I notice you didn't bring the 'nose-paint,'" he complained presently. "That's how you think of me!"

"Was the brandy all you wanted me to come for?"

"Oh, tut!" He rose. "I guess, after a week on this God-forsaken hill, I wanted to see you!"

"It isn't a God-forsaken hill," said the girl. "If you wanted to see me, why didn't you come to the God-forsaken town?"

"Yes—'why didn't' I! I guess you could answer that, if you were sworn in. I did think you'd have a letter, though," he said in disappointment.

"If you want to hear from them," the girl coldly said, "why don't you go to see them? Why do you hide?"

There was annoyance in his tone. "Why, now suppose your Law hauls off with her sword at those thugs and splits my head open with the back swing? They haven't any case. But they want to ask me questions on the witness stand. It's my reputation they're after. They think they can make me look queer. I offered to compromise the business end of it. They wanted four times as much."

Her manner seemed to nettle him. "Even so, why are you afraid to face them?"

"Because I'm making a bluff that's worth good money!" his voice strained. "You just want to throw it into me, don't you? You're a big pretty kid, and you know you say what you like. You think I'm running. Well, I'm not running anything except a bluff. There's no man on God's footstool that can face me down—I want to tell you that! The woman that ties up to me is in luck, if I do say it. I'm not an Adonis and I'm not a Hercules; but that's not the kind of machine that keeps the road in this century. The woman that gets me gets protected. I'll cut a swath through that old town for her to walk through where no man will speak to her twice. That's the kind I am; and I guess you know it!"

"Yes," she breathed. The man paused as if to fathom her thought.

"Yes, and you want to say I'm a tough," he complained. "I don't know where you get your ideas. You don't know anybody. I'm going to tell your mother to cut out some of those novels. Oh, well," he veered, "I wouldn't interfere. I guess you know I'd scour the town for you. But I want to tell you you're wrong, the way you talk to me. You're sure wrong," his tenderness was not unconvincing. "Why, you talk like a graduate of some bunco millionaire's Sunday-school. The real Christians are all dead. They took the short end of the bargain, as the Book told

'em to—centuries ago. And they trotted off to heaven, without bothering the Probate Court. That's evolution. Everybody's got to look to his bargain, and everybody does. You never buy a yard of ribbon but somebody gets the best of the bargain. Who gives away colleges and hospitals? Why the fakir that's always got the best of his bargains. Who built the Coliseum? Why, the chap who'd annexed about everything in sight and wanted to keep the people busy and fooled! It's the same thing now. Along comes Mr. Bunco and builds a spire to Learning, or Health, or Morals, or some fad. And he tells you: 'Look up there and admire that, while I rip off your scalp and take it to my tannery.' He's running a bluff. So am I. So is everybody. You're a woman; I guess you know that. I had to study the law to find it out."

"I'm trying to discover," she said impatiently, "why you wanted me to come here."

"Well," he answered, after some hesitation, "because you'll have to go and see the Chinaman."

"Ah, no!" she breathed, decidedly.

"Wait till you savey! It's your business, Beauty, just as much as mine," he said, satisfied that he could convince her. "I can't help knowing certain things I know; but I can help telling 'em—and I've got to. I wouldn't even tell you; and if I did, you'd misunderstand. If they get a judgment by default they'll open my safe deposit drawer. They'll find nothing there."

But if they search my room, they'll find all I've got and all you've got too."

"But they can't take what belongs to my mother and me."

"There isn't a scrap of paper in the world to prove they are yours. I couldn't see a mix-up like this coming," he said in his injured tone. "You'll have to go and do your best to compromise with them, or you stand to lose."

He tossed a stick into the blaze. The sparks shot up into the foliage; the firelight gave a bluish cast to the green.

"In your room," she said, "where did you hide our things?"

"So's you can go there and have them follow and snatch it out of your hands? That fellow you turned away from your door for me—who do you suppose he was? Who was it nosing after me on the mountain to-day? They've got me located; I shift out of this region before daylight. No; you'll have to go to Chinatown; and take my advice, go looking as handsome as you know how. If anybody says anything to you, you're a tourist from the East."

Kendry heard the girl rise. Her voice, long coming, faltered as though from a child disposed to weep.

"I'm going home now," she said.

"Better sit down till I tell you how to talk to those people," he said, with some doubt as to her intentions. Her feet pressed the dry brush.

"I shall not go to them," she said, with a breath. "I shall consider the money as lost. I shall not say anything I know—up till now—if I do know anything against you. But after to-night you mustn't count on me. I shall have nothing more to do with it," she came out.

"Don't be a fool!" he cried. He was exasperated, but still unconvinced. "Your mother would understand it; *she'd* take it from me that this is what to do—why can't you? Why can't you realize that you'll be losing every cent you've got!" He rose.

"It wasn't much," she said, with a softness that heightened his anger. "There's never a loss without some gain. I'm strong. It wasn't enough to pay," she dwelt on the word, "for the pretense, the falsehood, the slinking I've had to use to get here to-night. Oh, you can't budge me! I'm not so solitary in my way of thinking about this world. Mother's too old; she's too weak-willed. I'm going!"

Kendry saw the man's shadow darken the firelight.

"By God, you're not going!" he said. "This don't fool me. Some one's been afoul of your mind. You've had it in for me for months. Now, when you think I can't come back to town, you're going to give me the merry laugh! Well, I will be back in town; when I go, you'll go with me. I don't trust you. Sit down!"

Kendry's knees trembled.

"Arthur!" He heard her struggle. "Arthur!"

The scuffle ceased at the sound of Kendry breaking

through the brush. The brush grew denser toward the bottom of the ravine; a fire had once destroyed the greater redwoods and a thick growth of young ones seemed to encircle the fireplace without a break.

"Hello there?" he called. There was no answer. He discovered a thin, dry water course, closely bordered by the saplings, leading through. He stumbled over its rounded stones and came into the lighted circle.

The girl had identified him. She stood across the space, pale and avoiding his glance. The man stepped out from behind her. He was in the early thirties. He wore a stiff hat jammed over his forehead and carried a cigar crowded into the corner of his mouth. He sauntered toward Kendry with his hands in his side pockets and his not large eyes looking closely past a nose that rose too rapidly at the base and finished too trivially at the tip. An aggressive and intelligent alertness were set upon his face as if in defiance to a hostile and contemptible world. Kendry looked down an inch upon this older head so forwardly carried on the shoulders. A cynical self-confidence drew up one corner of the man's mouth.

"My name's Paulter," it said, as Kendry might be hesitating to ask. "What do *you* want?" He stood revolving the cigar in his lips. Kendry subdued his instinct to an apologetic smile.

"I've walked off the trail in the fog," he said. "You won't mind my drying off a bit?" He saluted the

girl, then thought best to seem to ignore her. Paulter gave no response to his smile. He stood motionless, keeping one hand in his pocket. He looked at Kendry's scar.

"What brings *you* around here?" he said, as if he expected a falsehood in answer.

"Just the walk," said Kendry. To affect to find nothing threatening in Paulter's manner he put down the canteen and took off his coat and held it to the heat. He felt Paulter's eyes traveling the outlines of his pockets. Nothing like a weapon was in evidence there. Paulter thoughtfully chewed his cigar. Perhaps something in Kendry's way of speech made him seem from too foreign a place to warrant suspicion. The cigar came from the mouth to the hand that had stayed so closely in the pocket; something like a smile flickered over the irregular mouth. Suddenly the cigar shot back again. Paulter stepped offensively near him.

"Where did you get that canteen?" he said. It was the tone of a man who gave no one the benefit of a doubt. An unpleasant heat rose at the back of Kendry's head; his fingers closed on the coat. From the corner of his eye he dimly saw the girl turned toward him. He smiled.

"Stumbled on it," he said. "If it's yours, you'll miss some of the brandy," he shrugged, good-naturedly.

He held the coat at arm's length toward the fire and

continued his gaze genially, but as steadily as he could, into Paulter's eye. He had come on the girl's account and he was under necessity of peace, even had his taste been in the least for brawling. He knew that a point might be reached where his pretense of not noticing the other's malevolence would become so transparent as to defeat its own end. He had passed through one encounter where the memory of his own inertness oppressed him; now he was suffering a similar stress. To have to turn on the man who awaited his least movement, and who too certainly concealed a pistol, would bring the situation to no better pass than it was when he had attempted to better it, apart from his regard for his own life. But to smile was to pull up a weight from his vitals by a thread. It brought up a sigh along with it; the sound disconcerted him—it seemed to suggest anxiety or fear. While he maintained his gaze on Paulter he wondered if it was fear. He knew he was not calm. He had never laid hands on a man in anger. His willing understanding had, so far, borne him over places where mere calculative tact might have failed. He had now to learn how much more depressing it is to consume in the blood the venom which rage produces than to turn this venom into violence. His falsehood about the canteen, made without a glance at the girl, advisable though he felt it, sickened him with a sense of its moral disadvantage. Paulter's rapid looks from Kendry to her and back again seemed penetrating the history of their after-

noon and coloring it with the man's own cynical surmisals. Her flush had paled. She faced Paulter without faltering, yet without breathing. Kendry's mouth began to dry. He saw her sink with uneven respiration to a fallen tree trunk. The relief of a muscular movement offered itself to him.

"Won't you put on my coat?" he asked her.

Paulter was gruffly before him. "You keep your coat," he said over his shoulder. He took off his own and transferred the automatic pistol from it, with a full glance at Kendry. Paulter was not clad for the wilds; brushed and smoothed to the prosperous appearance in which he had reached the mountain, he would have passed in some drawing-rooms—until he should speak—for one of their admissible but less-inspiring quantities. It was peculiar to American life that he was inferior to his clothes and superior to his manner of speech. Paulter threw his coat over the girl's knees. Kendry had decided that the man had gone too far in contempt of him.

"Both of them," he smiled, following Paulter's coat with a proffer of his own. He moved away from the two, acknowledging the girl's faint thanks. He heard Paulter in pursuit of him. This was the man, he could not doubt, to whom he owed the wound that smarted anew upon his forehead. Kendry tightened his teeth on the necessity, the apparent impossibility, of finding what should avert a speech, an act more insolent than could be answered save with his fists.

The mouth which so suggested a blow leaned over to him tonelessly :

“ You want to know what I think about that canteen? ”

The question gave time for an answer. Paulter's coolness, perhaps overbuilt on Kendry's long-suffering, added to the probable ease of knocking him into the fire. The girl's fingers were gripping the bark of the fallen redwood, her eyes widened in a message Kendry could not gather. He wavered; he heard a call from out the fog.

It was an Oriental voice, pronouncing Paulter's name with assurance. Paulter had defensively started to put Kendry between it and himself, but he stopped. A canny speculativeness entered his eyes; but he made his answer sound indifferent.

“ Nothing to stop you from coming down,” he said. There was the rustle of two men pushing their way down through the chaparral. For the moment the situation was relieved for Kendry, whether or not the odds were now to become three to one against him. Nothing from the girl illuminated that point. Paulter's coat slipped from her knee. She left the log and stood looking down into the fire. The small movements of her nostrils could not conceal the stirring of something new within her. It might have been by a natural inadvertence that she had folded Kendry's coat under her arm. Paulter had not noticed it. He waited at the edge of the circle, listening conjecturally

toward the oncomers, his mouth unevenly drawn, his back half turned to the girl. Kendry sought some sign from her.

The coals were pinkening her cheeks and enforcing the blue of her irises. The smoke was going straight into the misty stillness whose particles took the shadow. The fire lay in the bed of what in winter would be a pool, bottomed with gravel, receiving waters due for the lake a thousand feet below. The taller redwoods overhung in darknesses outlined by feathery branching curves. Against the thought of Paulter and his emanations stood the slim soft figure of the girl, with the blood beating in her cheek. There was nothing of hysteria there, consuming though she might be. There was an increasing set of the teeth, a movement of the eye through the smallest arc of a circle at the nearing of the others. If they were still more to threaten her dignity, Kendry's fingers strained for some decisive act. He stole a glance at Paulter, then sought with his glistening eyes to bid her go, while he sprang through the fire and kicked its embers into Paulter's startled face.

She held him for an instant with a look where all the history of her predicament seemed to lie open to him had he time to read. He was to be motionless, to be silent, the one shake of her head implored. He turned to Paulter. The same voice called from close at hand, asking the way to the fire in accents unmistakably Chinese. The girl sprang through the line of

Kendry's sight, over the coals and into the foliage of the younger trees. Their branches swung back into the circle. Paulter wheeled to hear her whipping through the outer saplings. He tore after her with a profane muttering, a beating down of branches and a crashing of dead undergrowth such that the sound of her own going was drowned.

To follow him in the way he broke would have seemed like a threat of attack on an armed man. Kendry ran out of the circle by the way he had come. He butted through the dense and darkening maze, reckless of hair, of skin, of clothing. He battled out of the redwoods into the oaks and on into the manzanita, still higher than his head, each tougher. He laughed silently with the joy of being in action and at the success he felt would come to the plan he had. He emerged on the higher ground where the shrubs rose but waist high. He stood still. The firelight was diffused over a broad space in the fog. Paulter was behind, lower down, cursing the deeper stretch of crooked, wiry stocks that caught him. He heard Paulter stop and listen. There was no other sound; the girl must be kneeling somewhere with the hope that he would pass her. Kendry began to move on as if in stealth, but he made the manzanita scratch against his boots loud enough for the ear of Paulter. He smiled at the sound of Paulter dashing after him, guided by this scratching, and at his own easy control of the distance that should be maintained between

them. To keep Paulter well behind he was presently running through the darkness, kicking through the stiff low chaparral. He made a blind leap and landed in the branches of a larger thing that closed over him and let him gently to the ground. He crouched and held his breath. The firelight had dimmed to almost its first faint luminous wash in the distance. He heard Paulter panting as he came in the fancied trail of the girl, now through less obstruction and at greater speed; he heard the voices of the two Chinese speculating to each other by the fire; he heard the hoot of an owl a mile away, all against the gray silence. Paulter came and stopped where Kendry could have touched him. It was as if the man knowingly stood over him, weapon in hand, deliberating whether to ease the rage that boiled in his throat. But he moved a step away, seemingly with his back turned. Kendry waited with a hand upon the shale, his fingers trembling with the temptation to even matters with the man who had ambushed him. He saw the dim form make as if to start toward the lower part of the slope. If Paulter found the girl it would be in that direction, Kendry believed. He clenched his fists: what had been a temptation seemed about to become a duty. Then Paulter halted again and muttered his profane comment. "She'll pay me for that!" he added. He turned slowly back to the fire. Soon the only sound was his plaintive monotone addressed to his two visitors by the fire. With her knowledge of the mountainside the girl

must be well away. Kendry staggered up a hundred feet and threw himself on the edge of the trail. He was faint, but he was pleased. He had what might suggest a theory to explain the whole of the girl's behavior.

He no longer held the canteen; but she had gone with his coat. It would be the link which the canteen might have been, save that the initiative by which it should serve him for another interview must lie with her. To-night it would be impossible to find her. She would flee at any sound of footsteps. The dampness bade him take up his way to the summit.

He should manage to see her in any case. She was beautiful—which meant for John Kendry that her perfection penetrated throughout. She was in distress and without true friends. She had a mother who was feeble of body and weak of will—which would elucidate the intrusion of Paulter into their lives. She was solitary, and she loved the woods. She had tried to explain existence, and it meant to her nothing that Paulter stood for. She was unhappy—and she was beautiful.

His seeing her would add to the interest of the episode as he intended to recount it to Mary Eastwood. It might mean his also seeing Paulter, who was evidently jealous and unscrupulous. But the enmity of unscrupulous men Kendry did not expect to avoid in his projected career. If there had been the impetuous in what he had said to the girl about this choice of

career it now stood the test of further thinking. Under her gaze he had vaguely said what he expected to evolve into a precise programme for his life. He could not see into the future; it was as undefined as the mist through which he pushed his way toward the summit. But he had said at random that his departure might begin with her, and the words echoed prophetically. The way might always lead through obscurity and no fame accompany the achievements time might let him place to the credit of his idea. But the idea itself would be enough. An idea that should itself be enough was what he had been seeking. The way might lead him through great trials, even to death; but all ways do, he said to himself in the gloom. But its beginning perhaps could be generously, beautifully impersonal with this girl.

He was glad when he reached the tavern and saw himself in a mirror that Mary Eastwood and her mother had early retired. His dishevelment, his haggardness, would have been too disturbing. Mary's presence seemed to linger about the corridors. Her signature went across the page of the register with the precision of fine lace somewhat starched. It brought back to him with a freshness possible only to such proximity the atmosphere that was as if created by her as his refuge from the rude world. When she had learned to understand her value to him she would become unwilling not to enjoy it. That he could not doubt.

He drew his bed to the window and raised the shade. A flood of moonlight surprised him. The sky was cold and sparkling. Below, on the level where he had entered, stretched the white upper surface of the fog. Only the summit of the mountain stood above its compacted billows; the rest was the cottony drift, blue-shadowed in its irregularities by the moon-distance, silent, motionless distance without end.

Somewhere in the underlying gloom the girl was making her way toward a late train and ferry to the city—she, too, alone in a resolution which should change her life. He shook his head at the empty distance. He could imagine her advancing toward his window, magnified, but real, treading the floor of the mist. Her hair glistened in the moon; her eyes reflected the vault above her; she smiled forward to him, as one approaching in the unconditioned confidence of a child.

CHAPTER III

THE OLDER WOMAN

WHEN, the next noon, Kendry descended the mountain on a gravity car and took the electric train toward the ferry for the city, the comparative sharpness of his overnight abstractions began to dim in the detail of practical life. From the mountain existence could be viewed in perspective: sea, sky, summit, and the city appeared as symbols of definite meaning, simple and cool to the mind. But as he left the higher altitude and mixed with his kind, the mere incidents of so inconsiderable a journey began to enfever him with innumerable small reactions, each involving his attitude toward a person or thing, each reaction capable of its moment's problem for a lively conscience and an active mind. Amid so many drifts and eddies how was he to keep his course trimmed to the idea?

While he had stared up at the ceiling from his bed, his refreshed brain had gone over the processes through which the idea had grown, and they had seemed to him without flaw. In his memorable talks with his father, spreading through Kendry's adolescence, he had formed the habit of considering himself always in distant but certain relation to a conception

of the universe, and in that relation he had found his most stimulating sources of thought. To some men such considerations led on to religious access, to devoutness in established worship, to acceptance of one prophet or another, and thus to a point of relative rest from speculation as to how to live. There had never been an atom of superstitious misgiving for Kendry while he had spent some of the meditative hours of his youth in stripping from present Christianity its husk of formalities, its accretion of doubtful history, its dead tissue of uncompromising injunction. Back of all these he came to Christ the Preacher, who first roundly voiced the morality that inevitably had evolved from human experience. But history had afforded no prophet who, as a lover, a husband, a father, a citizen, had become a commanding pattern for all time.

According to Kendry, the one thing true of all life was motion, and the prime instinct of a live man was to go somewhere and do something; and if the man had a live spirit, his instinct was to go and do something with a new element, which would tend toward the progress of the race to a higher state. For most men the struggle for a competency determined the direction of their going; it regulated their humanity, it bounded their hopes, it checked the keenness of their conjectures as to the unseen, the unknown. But to Kendry, sharing a modest two or three millions with a married sister who lived in Rome—he did not know

quite how much he possessed—the struggle for existence gave place to the struggle for felicity. Where he was beginning life, was for most men the goal and limit of their aspirations.

For nine-tenths of the remainder, to which Kendry belonged, the struggle for felicity consisted in trying to turn the two or three millions into twenty or thirty millions, with the accompanying increase of a certain power over the unwilling and with the accompanying vexation of their envious hatred. With the acquisition of twenty or thirty millions would come the desire for two or three hundred millions. The objection to all this for a symmetrical mind was that the direction of such an aim was circular, bending nowhere but upon itself; and that it was monotonous and without imaginative vitality. It involved such an expenditure of energy upon such an inadequate extension of purpose as to suggest a dog chasing its tail. It was in logic—viewed as a way of escape from eventual ennui—equal to a man's endeavor to run away from a splinter which is in his foot. If this formula of a fixed radius, in which his rich friends stupidly trotted, was not enough for Kendry, what would produce for him the transcendental curve that leads to better satisfactions?

By youth and temperament he was cheerful in his regard of humanity as a going concern. He believed that it was ascending, partly from new wisdom out of experience, partly from greater conscious exertion

of will. Somewhere in the sense of having contributed to this upward movement lay the deepest, most enduring satisfaction possible to an individual. But for a man of twenty-four to stand upon a mountain and to announce, even to himself: "I will improve this world!" opens to so many possibilities of dogmatism, of priggishness, of self-righteousness, that one may congratulate Kendry upon his instinctive perception of this danger.

If he felt some confidence in his reasoning powers, he was not so sure of his capacity in a practical world. Already among his generation of rich young men vice fairly well had marked the toll it would take; and the strong among the survivors were immersed in large undertakings, where such new ideas as came to them went regularly through trial to success or to relinquishment. Their judgment as to what was feasible, at a point where his purposes and theirs might intersect, would be supported by more rigid tests of practice than he yet could refer to. Yet, if his life did not lead him with equal activity across the lines of theirs, it would lead him into the backwaters of mere abstraction. Even professed philanthropists and those who made their careers in works of charitable benevolence, moved more or less in the approach to these backwaters, as against the swift currents where men dwelt on even terms with the strong and the fortunate.

It was among those boiling waters that Kendry's father had made his money. Kendry had no dis-

taste for a plunge in them; he had only an objection to making them his vital element. He did not want more money, more power, more distinction, than he possessed; yet he did not want to lose his fellowship with other men who were striving for those things. But he did want to devote himself to a strengthening of his will, a broadening of his conscious perception, a general extension of his being along the path that has its known beginning in protoplasm and its end in infinity. He had been still without the definite application of this desire necessary to give it living value. He believed, as he lay staring at the ceiling, that for the girl of his overnight adventure there was something he could perform that would focus the beginning of his career and that would lift his purposes from the threat of a wearisome vagueness.

For the success of his plan he counted on Mary Eastwood; between her and himself the process, he hoped, would forge another link. He had jumped up full of the recountal he would make to her of his yesterday's adventure. But after having seen the haggardness of his unshaven face, the tatters of his garments, he had not been displeased to find that Mary Eastwood and her mother, apparently unaware of his arrival, had returned to town on the morning train. Dishevelment was distasteful to Mary. Probable approach to it, as in a strong wind, a wet pavement, a warm walk up a San Francisco hill, she scented afar and skillfully avoided. She was ever correct and blem-

ishless, cool and colorless of skin, and utterly hooked and eyed in her simple richness of costume and coiffure. It gave her for his eye a classic mold, a sense of her being a refuge in restraint. There was little of that in the quickness of her judgments, of her facial play, of her reaction against what she did not approve of; but there was much of it in her aloofness as to all that lay within the sensual line. She was seven years his senior, but she had never referred to this fact. To suggest it to Kendry as an objection to his marrying her, would have been to meet his scorn.

With his affection for her and with his idea he had started down the mountain, feeling like a craft stanchly stowed for a journey. In an hour and a half he had passed from these pleasant reflections to a beholding of the expectoration, the profanity, the familiarity, the obesity, of a crowd on the front of the ferryboat approaching the dock at the city. The crowd had risen and patiently begun to stand long before the boat had turned in from the roadway. Among them he was recognized by some women in fine raiment, a capitalist or two, and an artist; and he distinguished many types of humanity, of many nationalities, all bent on purposes which had in common that these purposes were different from his own. The numerical argument smote him; whether there was not something quixotic, whether always there is not, in trying to do precisely what no one else is trying to do.

Against this, he summoned the soft vitality of the

girl, her gentle wistfulness, her blue-eyed mystery. It prevailed and he believed it would prevail with Mary Eastwood. The odor of sewage emptying into the bay at low tide assailed his nostrils. The mountain departed from the distant view, shut off by a row of splintered piles. The crowd poured forth through a precarious looking shed, it deposited Kendry in the midst of drays and street cars, of risen dust and hurrying feet, of shouts and clangor and rumbling, of jostling and importunities, where the one important thoroughfare debouched meanly to the water-front. Kendry's mind went back to the mountain, the clean chaparral, the air laden with wild-lilac bloom. He depressedly entered a cab.

In America he generally regarded such a thing as extravagance. The cab bounced over sink holes and loose paving stones up the broad street lined with wholesale business houses; it interfered with the cross traffic and with the cable cars, taking advantage where it could and giving way where it must. The buildings were a heterogeneous mixture, some new and massive, ranging to positive beauty, others old and without the possibilities of the picturesque, all in the clash of undigested progress.

Against its ephemeral total, its untidiness, the obstruction of the sidewalks, the compacted chaotic colorlessness of an American city, the cheerful sun rose from a clear sky, and a brisk breeze from the sea, sweeping loose papers and the débris of packing

cases, enlivened the heart with a certain inclination to irresponsibility. Gradually the scene bettered; the cab turned off at a point where the buildings had begun to be of the largest size and importance. Kendry looked up to the top of the structure that most impressively represented the Eastwood fortune. It stood a monument to the late Mark Eastwood; it reflected the personality of his son and it was the financial background of his daughter. It was ornate and heavily corniced and bore the window signs of great corporations. It was imposing enough as an answer to an idea that might be suspected of altruism. It looked down upon Kendry as if smiling with its ability to crush him and his little millions by the vast preponderance of men and money represented within. His cab stopped before a stuccoed building dating back to the bonanza days, beslitted with windows high and narrow. Shops covered most of the ground floor. The lobby of the hotel was gloomy with mahogany and cold with marble tiles; but in his room he had arranged colors that overcame the memory of the approach. They served to soften the harsh impression of his return to the city until he issued in another garb and hurried to find Mary Eastwood.

The painted redwood structure of the Eastwoods, with its cupola, its lathe-work, its sanded balustrade, clung to a steep decline, from whose top it looked back over many hills and forth along the brief plane occupied by the houses of the millionaires of the era

of the railroad and of the mines. A half acre of sward distributed about it, added to the considerable open spaces in the neighborhood. The house stood in the well-kept respectability of a past fashion, neither beautiful nor cheerful, but spacious. To Kendry, mounting its steps at this stage of his suppliancy for the favor of its single daughter, its aspect was familiar but still formal.

He hoped her mother would be there. He always had been at ease with Mrs. Eastwood; he had been at ease, though he was aware of her eye traveling between him and her daughter, at moments when their speech illuminated their state of sentiment toward each other. If Mrs. Eastwood desired a man of twenty-four to marry her daughter, her acts were apparently in accordance; her presence never endured but a few moments; her mood was of perpetual acquiescence to their plans for going to places together. If she wisely intended to add no fuel of opposition to a flame she might think to detect in her daughter, such an interpretation was beyond Kendry's habit of mind.

It was Henry Eastwood, however, who received him. His manner was of cordiality overflowing from a heavy face and a large frame, which at thirty-three was of coming adipose.

"You're never at your office, old chap," he said. "Two things I want to see you about. There's your lot back of Mab's on Mission street; why don't you put a joint building on the two frontages? It's a cinch!"

"Does Mary want to?" said Kendry.

"Get in and make her want to!" said Eastwood, on a rising scale, with his confidence, his winning manner which was an asset in his business. He leaned forward massively. "Make it another bond in your friendship with Mab! I can't help feeling how much our two estates would gain if we played our hands a little closer together. You know how our governors used to hobnob? Drop into the office, and let me show you another cinch or two!"

"You see, I don't spend the income, as it is; and I've just got it all where I can operate it in about two hours' work a day," said Kendry. "I don't think——"

"Needn't say so now," Eastwood waved cheerfully. "The other thing I wanted to talk about was Mary. You can't operate her in two hours a day! Have a drink? Now here's a friendly tip just how *to* operate Mab. Mind——"

"Go on," said Kendry, with good nature. "I came here to see her."

"Well," Eastwood drawled, leaning back in his chair, "she's come home with a grouch—a Pullman grouch; some trouble with the nigger. She's got neurasthenia, æsthesia and Europomania. Nothing to her discredit," he said, with a look to Kendry. "It's a fashionable complaint. She wants to sell out her end of everything here and buy consols, at two and a half per cent., and never have to come back to this country on business. The trouble is that if Mab wants

to, she can! Now, of course, I don't know what kind of affinity you are pursuing with Mab—that's her affair. But you say you've come back here to stay. Well, she says she's come back to pull up her stakes. That all——" he finished, twinkling wisely. Kendry heard the swish of silk petticoats in the corridor; he feared that his cheeks were warming. Eastwood rose lightly on his heavy legs. At the door he winked and lowered his voice.

"You'll want all your steam!" he grinned.

He made his escape without formality, as his sister and her mother entered the adjoining room. Kendry had a moment's look at Mary's long straight lines converging faintly at the waist, her full dark hair, the agreeable perfection of her raiment. She gave an exclamation of long suffering, and threw herself wearily into a chair before she saw him. Kendry met her at the threshold, his heart beating too swift a measure, his determination to be a man of forty submerged in the fervor of his greeting.

"It's a great joy to see you again!" he said, to the cool touch of her fingers. She shook her head to him, in the obsession she had brought with her.

"Isn't it too hideous!" she waved through the open window at the hills of housetops, while he went forward to her mother. "How *have* you stood this place so long! It's stupefying! We're marooned here, for two months!"

"You find no compensation in the sunshine, the sea

breeze, that line of mountains?" said Kendry. Her frown mixed with astonishment at him.

"What's to compensate me—for those four days in a Pullman, for the insolent servants, for those dreadful citizens, dinning their illiteracy in one's ears? What is there on earth to compensate for your spurious New York? It's too far out of London! And for Chicago—it's too near into Hell!" she calmly observed.

Kendry laughed. Mrs. Eastwood watched him. Her iron-gray hair had never been the color of her daughter's. The less obvious current of her emotions was from temperament, not from middle age. She did not join in his indulgence.

"A little habituation and one discovers the pleasanter side of it," Kendry appealed to her.

"A little tolerance and one loves the good side of it," Grace Eastwood said. Mary glanced at her pityingly.

"I haven't the least intention of getting to love it!" she said, to the maid who took her hat. Her determination stood in the pressure of her lips. Their thin line of slight curve, the high narrowness of her forehead, the slenderness of her nose in its regular descent, meant for Kendry her invincible virtue. "Will you tell me what there is here but food for a bourgeoisie?" she said. "Is there any art, any music, anything to soothe a single one of one's offended senses? It's a country where there's no conversation.

I shall go out to-morrow night, and talk Heaven knows what twaddle with the women in one corner, while the men crowd into another corner and talk real estate. I shall go to a cotillion and be led through a dance by the gentleman whose firm has done the catering for the evening. I shall go to the theater and see an English drawing-room drama played by persons who never set foot in a proper drawing-room, and who can't speak the English language, even through their noses. I shall go—I shall go back to the Continent as soon as I can!" she dismissed it. "How do you do?"

"Bursting with health!" said Kendry. It belied the effects of his strain the night before.

"Have you settled in California?" Mrs. Eastwood startled him.

Kendry made his answer boldly to her daughter.

"Yes," he said. "I've discovered things to do here." He began the story of his day on Tamalpais, lightening the assault he had suffered and dwelling on the spiritual process that had worked itself through his strange encounters. He did not feel called upon to follow the irresponsible workings of his mind in a dream, where a girl with blue eyes became confused with a woman whose gray eyes now followed him with a touch of amusement and condescension. Her mother sat longer than her custom, taking him in. There had been in her youth a great power in her approving smile; she had been beautiful and had moved things by her beauty rather than by the edged tools of intellect. He

remembered, when he awakened to her having made her noiseless withdrawal, her remark that it was well for him to stay a good American rather than become a man without a country. She was on his side in that, he comfortably felt. Mary listened, with her fingers tapping the arm of the chair. He emerged into his plea for those blue eyes.

"I want to change her environment, to let in the air and the sun. She'll meet her opportunities—or rather, they'll come after her, no gainsaying that!" said Kendry. "I rely on you to help me." Mary consulted her fingers.

"Could she serve at a breakfast table?" She looked up, with some preparation for his demurring.

"Oh, I must have quite failed to describe her!" said Kendry. "She's a personage; she has majesty. She'd carry it all off here," he waved at the room. "Her voice is enough in itself; it's like a cool waterfall in a far little cañon. But it's her beauty that will suffice you. What I'm getting at is, that you'll want to model her."

"You mean on even terms," said Mary. "You mean I'm to introduce her into society. She can't; she won't have any clothes."

"She transcends clothes," said Kendry.

"Then she isn't a she," said Mary. "But this rough; this person whom she follows about with a canteen of brandy—am I to ask him to dinner?" said Mary.

"Exactly not!" said Kendry. "Don't you see, it is her being hedged into places where he *can* follow her that is spoiling her life. If we rescue her from that, if we create a natural environment for her, the air will be too rarefied for him to breathe. He'll simply expire. She'll blossom into her proper destiny. It will be as much a rescue as if she were drowning. She *is* drowning; and to save her will be the most tremendous satisfaction. It's the one sort of true satisfaction the world affords, I've become convinced. And what doubles it for me, is the thought that you and I should share it together."

She faintly rose to his warmth. "You've fallen in love with a California cabbage-rose, from the outside, I think," she said judicially. "I have never seen a girl of fine instincts who went hunting criminals in the wilderness at night, to give them brandy. But one doesn't have to follow the matter up beyond convenience. It might while away one's exile. What's her name?"

"I don't know. I don't even know where she lives," said Kendry. "It's my first purpose to find that out. I'm going at it now," he said, with a fine determination for restraint in his visits at the Eastwood house. Mary surveyed him with interest, as he rose. His heart beat a little faster at the success of this first step with her. At the door of the drawing-room he suddenly fell from his resolve. He felt that he should get a return for his ardor.

"It's going to be one more bond between *us!*" he said. "That's what I most want!"

She drew her hand away. "Don't!" she said. "You must remember how this place gets on my nerves, and you must keep sane."

He endeavored to smile collectedly. "Good-by!" he flushed, trying to bridge the gap with warmth despite her. He murmured some disconnected syllables. On the steps, he ground his teeth for having leaped the barriers; it had been callow, awkward, ridiculous. He must work for the moment when it would be she to step outside of them, even against her will. He was determined that such a moment should come. There was nothing to interrupt him from keeping on in that determination.

CHAPTER IV

A VISIT TO CHAN KOW

THE girl with the blue eyes knew his name and could discover his address and return his coat. But Kendry was not in a mood to wait for anything. He had his programme, and he would demonstrate to Mary that he could carry it out with reference to the girl and by so much more, probably, with reference to Mary herself. He stared out through the curtains of a window at his club. Chance might let him spend a lifetime before it favored him again as it had on the mountain; chance had him in its grip, powerless but defiant. Yet it was not extraordinary, considering the location of his club, that presently he saw her, unmistakably her from that poise of head, that richness of hair, gliding by in a blue dress on the open end of an electric car.

Upon his precipitous return to the pavement, her car had drawn a block away; but another followed it. He crowded to a standing place on the forward footrail. Presently she had alighted and was on another car, shooting up a hill, at right angles to him. Five minutes later she changed again. Her car slid down a steep hill through Chinatown, and now he could best follow her on foot. Evidently something had occurred to alter her destination. She had traveled

over three sides of a rectangle in a way that for any purpose was decidedly a roundabout. Kendry swung down through the Japanese fringe of the Chinese quarter with a zest. He saw her alight at Kearney Street and go rapidly to the north. Soon he was gaining on her by cutting across the square. She turned about once and swept a glance across the sward, so that he could not understand why she did not take account of the marked raising of his hat. Immediately she hurried down a narrow street and was lost to sight. When he reached the corner she had disappeared.

He continued to another crossing, then turned back, looking into the entrances for one likely to have swallowed her. The halls were dusty and dingy; some of them bore the ancient placards of small business concerns and minor factories. On one corner was the police headquarters and the morgue. Other openings led to cheap restaurants and saloons. The street was on the edge of Chinatown and of the Latin quarter at that point and its atmosphere incongruous with the girl. He could not knock at all the doors up the various stairs and ask for a young woman whose name he did not know. But he was certain that she had not gone beyond these narrow bounds and he resolved to wait. He took up a position in the square, where he could see whosoever issued forth. Chinatown came down on three sides of the square, with its signs in red or black and gold, and its painted

balconies. Across the square in the breeze that rarely fails, the bronze galleon of the Stevenson monument swept full-sailed. But for the box-like proportions of the inclosure the scene would have been of a picturesqueness complete.

It grew dusk, and Kendry kept in mind the character of the girl's blue serge gown, of her simple straw hat, and of her distinguished bearing, which triumphed over a costume that was neither distinguished nor new. In his imagination he saw her dressed by Mary Eastwood's genius. For an hour he paced up and down. He became hungry and less confident as to the direction of her vanishing. It ended in his resolving on dinner, at one of the Bohemian restaurants near by, for a diversion from his disappointment.

He bought one of the evening papers, observing that it was a sign of a relaxed will for him to do so. Its scareheads mocked his intelligence and belied his tastes, and he knew that part of its contents would arouse his contempt. But he entered the restaurant, and sat down at one of the crowded tables to run it over for its amount of important news while he ate. When he had finished and chanced again to glance at it, he saw that one of its scareheads contained the name of Arthur Paulter. Paulter's room had been robbed of sixteen thousand dollars' worth of securities, mainly unregistered bonds. A Chinese cook employed on the premises was missing. Such a theft on the part of a Chinaman from a white man was

unprecedented, and the police were inclined to doubt that he was the thief. But Paulter accused the cook of having been in collusion with a firm of Chinese jewelers to whom Paulter had supplied silver bullion, certain bars of which they claimed had been cored and filled with baser metal. Paulter had denied responsibility for this; but a criminal suit had been brought against Paulter and he had evaded summons by leaving town. In his absence the matter had been compromised out of court. Now, on his return, he charged that the theft had been arranged in order to compensate the Chinese for their relinquishments of part of their claim against him, as well as to mulct him in a large additional sum.

These securities, then, were, as he had overheard Paulter say, all that the girl and her mother possessed. The loss completed her as a vision appealing to his imagination, his generosity. If at the moment he could have found Paulter, he would have attempted by a sweet reasonableness to make his way to the girl. She would take some employment, of course, and Kendry must see that it was of the most desirable sort. From that he must go on to the upbuilding of her opportunities. Her beauty was the outward sign for him of a quantity the most desirable in the world, addressing itself to him for preservation and care. Helping her, as one cultivates the soil for the lily, would add to the sum total of human joy and welfare, whatsoever it cost in the neglect or the uprooting of

unlovely weeds. It was a great enterprise, this devout recognition and setting in its proper sphere of a lovely work of nature; and, according to Kendry, one of its wonders was to be the beautifully impersonal part he himself would play. He would be the god behind the cloud, godlike in his powers and in his remoteness.

Where he sat one could see down the busy space with the rows of small tables and a broad frieze of continuous Pompeian red. Drawn in sharp contrasting colors on this frieze was a series of scenes and figures, with inscriptions, quotations and cabalistic words, suggesting the dreams of one who had read cheerfully of a droll Balzac and had dined and smoked with liberality in a company whose mood was for complete jocular abandonment. On the ceiling, from above the door, the prints of a pair of masculine feet were drawn, proceeding thence along to four prints of the legs of a table, between which waited two smaller footprints that were not masculine. At a longer table in the center of the room dined the group who popularly were supposed to sail under these emblazonments, and who gave the restaurant its literary and artistic vogue and made it "a place to go." They stood out rather well defined from the more elaborate personages who filled most of the tables along the sides, and who commented upon them in varying spirit, but generally with some envy of the prominence and gayety of the group. Kendry had but little acquaintance among them and but little sympathy for them,

because, for want of a better reason, they appeared to dine perpetually in one place. He thoughtfully tore out of the newspaper the reference to Paulter and folded it away.

"Interested in that case?" said the little man at his elbow. Kendry for the first time examined him. The man had entered shortly after himself; he had extraordinarily large ears and small pale eyes that shifted with a certain intelligence beneath huge shaggy brows. He wore a suit of shoddy and a scarlet tie that nearly hid his collar. He breathed audibly through his nose.

"Perhaps you know Paulter?" said Kendry.

"I saw you putting away that article," said the little man. "Got business in Chinatown, I suppose——"

"You seem interested in the case," said Kendry, with some enjoyment of the man's persistency. "Perhaps you are acquainted in Chinatown."

The man across the table grinned. He was bronzed and wiry, with close-cropped hair and with a fouled anchor tattooed on the back of his hand. A black-haired Pole sat next him, with a waxy skin and hollow dreamy eyes. The four at the table made a mixture unusual even in this Bohemian resort. The little man met Kendry's evasion with a full glance, then smiled good naturedly, pulling at his brushy mustache. Kendry was in the whimsical mood to pass him his cigar case. The man with the ears and the sailor unhesitatingly accepted his choice tobacco. The Pole searched in his waistcoat pocket.

"I will accept one of yours, sir, if you will accept one of mine," he pronounced in excellent English. His pricked fingers held forth a black suspicious weed which Kendry gravely bowed to. The two others twinkled. "You don't mind my taking one of my lighter ones first?" Kendry politely said.

"I don't mind your throwing it into the gutter, sir," said the Pole, without expression on his face. "It's the same privilege I have with yours," he explained, putting Kendry's in his mouth. The four looked at each other while the matches were passed.

"Well, gentlemen," the little man puffed, "speaking of Chinamen; if you do a Chink white he won't do you no dirt. I don't know what your sentiments are——" he deferred to Kendry. Kendry thoughtfully surveyed him. He was being approached, he felt, and as with most rich men experience had taught him to be wary. The sailor filled the pause by laying on the table the two chopped halves of a silver dollar.

"You can have my sentiments for nothing," he said. They all looked at the ruined coin.

"Case for a coroner's jury?" said Kendry.

"It is," said the sailor, "and you can take it from me; the best part of a heathen Chineese is the horse-hair of his cue and pigskin of his hide. I've gone agin him in all the plague-ports of the world, and I say: have no business with him till ye have his ear nailed to the doorpost!"

"Let us know the worst," said Kendry.

“Why, me and a friend of mine come ashore the other day and thought we’d have our fortunes told,” said the sailor. “There was a sign in Fish Alley:

“‘*Ah Ma has the double eye*’ (meaning second sight, I suppose). ‘*Plenty good fortune tell!! Price: one bit girl, two bit boy, three bit lady, four bit man.*’

“We climbed three flights of stairs that shook like ratlines, and come out on the roof. ’Twas a tannery up there, laid out with cat and dog skins; and there was a four by seven cabin, with every kind of an unmatched stick you could pick up in a lumber yard. Here was old Ah Ma with a pair of specs as big as door knobs and nothing else more to speak of; for he was mending a hole in the bilge of his old silk breeches. He had a stove made of an oil can on top of a stool outside and was stewing pig’s liver and rice on the top of some charcoal; and inside he had a bunk the size of a bachelor, with a turkey red comforter, and the walls lined with Sunday supplements to keep out the wind. He had shelves all around it, with bottles of dried snakes, horned toads, and sea-horses. There was an old crow hung by the neck in a glass jar of gin, and every kind of bad-looking bug and worm and every other sort of poisonous thing ye can pick off the ground for your health. He had a cat with no eyes, and a Waterbury clock, and a fat China joss tied on the wall, smelling with joss-sticks. Across the door, to keep you from minding his business, he had a table with an ink slab and brushes and half a

dozen bamboo cylinders filled with fortune sticks, and a red luck calendar with blue silk strings.

"He bows very solemn and sticks the needle in a safe place in his breeches and lowers himself down into 'em and was ready for business. Then I handed him out some China lingo."

"Pidgin coo?" said Kendry.

"Not at all," said the sailor. "I hashed up the names of the treaty ports with a little Chinook jargon and tonsilitis and then sang it up in contralto with a kind of bow-string movement to my gizzard. 'Twas fluent with him. I finished every sentence with 'Hankow'; and it made him think I was from that place. All these Chinese are from Canton and can no more sabbee Hankow dialect than you could smoke that cigar the tailor here just give you. So says Ah Ma:

"'You talkee Melican? You wanchee fortune tell?'

"'You've hit it in the eye, Mama,' says I. For a joke I took my friend by the nape of the neck. 'My friend here is deaf, dumb and daffy—no fashion can talkee do, no fashion can sabbee. But the poor idiot thinks you can tell his fortune and draw the map of his life. He don't care about his life, Mama,' says I, 'but he would like to know the name of his future wife—in order to avoid making her acquaintance.'

"Old Mama, he picks up a little gong and tells my friend to keep striking it, which I made show of say-

ing it to him in sign language. Then while the music was going on, old Mama he picks up a telescope and looks through the little end of it into my friend's ear. Then he shuts his eyes and pulled out a stick from the cylinder and finds the number and looks up the number in his calendar and begins to write, with me and my friend nodding to the gong as solemn as sea-cows. 'You might read that, Mama,' says I, 'for I left my gold spectacles at Hankow.' The old man never cracks a human expression on his face. 'This fortune tell,' says he, 'one piece wife catchee two year more. Two boy catchee, two year more. Maybe one piece girl catchee bimeby, lookout! Bimeby one tousan dollar catchee.' Then he sits back as blank as an empty plate. 'Is that all?' says I. He makes no answer. 'Is that all for climbing them stairs and not being invited to luncheon à la pig's liver?' says I. He looks at me; then he measures up my friend. 'How much pay?' says he. 'Why, "four bit man,"' says I. Then the old man smiles with his eye toward me and frowns with the eye toward my friend. 'S'pose make him pay fi' dollar,' says the old man to me. 'Two dollar hop you; two dollar hop me.' 'Two dollar hop what, what——?' says I. Old Mama he points at my friend. 'One piece man four bit,' he nods. 'One piece *damn fool, fi' dollar*. You take a hop, me take a hop.'

"We sat staring at him a bit, helpless with our feelings. 'No more time talkee,' says the old man. 'My

makee new panty,' he says, beginning to peel off. 'My go walkee-walkee.'

"'You do?' says my friend. He jumps up and turns the old man the color of rawhide. 'I'll heap damn foolee you,' he shouts. He leans over the table and picks up the old man by the shreds of his breeches. 'You'll take a hop, ye blitherin' Chinee toad!' says my friend. He lifts old Mama up and brings him down on the table like a bag of bedsprings, with the old man blowing a police whistle at the top of his lungs. 'Hold on!' I says to my friend. 'We don't want to be crowding the police station.' The whole of the tannery and a hotel and a sausage factory spills up on the roof to take a hand; but they didn't make us feel homesick. My friend grabs up the hot chop suey off the stove. 'The first one of ye gets a soup-ticket in the face,' says he. 'Stand away or I'll wipe him all over ye!' says I, waving the old man at 'em. 'You pay me four bits!' shouts the old man, through the police whistle. 'Keep cool!' says I. I hands him out a ten dollar gold piece. 'Make change!' says I, watching him close. The old devil pretends to tremble all over. He reaches down inside a tea-comforter and counts out ten silver dollars and one four bit piece. My friend grabbed 'em out of my hand and run down the stairs, and I found him on the sidewalk laughing to split himself.

"'He took your ten dollar piece and give you back ten dollars and a half,' says my friend.

"And that's what I'm talking about," said the sailor. "Devil a one of them dollars would any one take in Chinatown. We took one into the Sub-Treasury and there's the way they give it back. We tried to get up to that roof again, but we met a heavy door. If you want to get ahead of a Chineese, you're too ambitious," he gathered his coin.

Kendry mused over his torn newspaper.

"Who's making counterfeit dollars in Chinatown?" he said.

"Machinery, capital—private capital," said the Pole. "There should be no private capital; then there would be no private business and no private profit; and no crime, no misery!"

"Socialism," said Kendry. "It would all come back to brains and energy. You can't distribute those *pro rata*."

"Capitalism!" retorted the Pole. "I see you know who I am, sir," he said with assurance, to which Kendry could but stare. "I know who you are, too. We are separated by several millions of dollars. We may both live to be nearer together, sir." He bore the pale certainty of one who believed himself a prophet. His nose was straight and finely molded, with the transparency of skin that told of some lurking disease. "You could go into Chinatown to-night and with your money you'd have the power to crush that counterfeiting out," he shrugged, "but I fancy you have urgent business elsewhere."

"I have urgent business," Kendry rose. "These things are the province of the secret-service agents."

At the cashier's desk the little man with the ears caught up to him. "You are Mr. Kendry," he said, for its effect. He noted Kendry's acceptance of his name, then let himself out ahead of Kendry, and disappeared down a dark street, his ears looming. Kendry was thinking of counterfeit dollars. A man who supplied the necessary metals to the other conspirators, and who had fallen out with them, might find himself in the position of Arthur Paulter, given details which Kendry could invent. If so, Paulter ought to be imprisoned, and his being where he ought to be would remove his baneful shadow from the girl. Kendry started for Chinatown.

That quarter lay within easy distance from the banks, the greater shops, the most noted region of private houses. Kendry entered into what, but for the dull minds that had laid out the city, would have been a locality of extraordinary picturesqueness. The streets which lay at right angles to the steep hillside ran upon practical levels; but the streets which climbed the hills, ignoring the experience of all other countries in all times, took for the most part a grade impossible to horses and cut the town into a deadly monotony of rectangles. The easy ascent, the broken lines, the varied shapes, the longer vistas which the hills might have yielded to men of finer susceptibilities—all the mystery and charm to which a man turns

in disillusionment from the New World's game—these had been precluded, perhaps forever, by the wax-eyed pioneer with his square and straight-edge. But he could not set the lines in other dimensions; and once one crossed into the Oriental sphere, the upright lines, the smugness, the clinging to a state of some repair, gave way to irregularities and indentations, to balconies, shelter excrescences, all softened by an unarrested decay; whence in the mass each surface in every free direction took on a variety, a stimulating interest for the eye, to which all the operations of the Chinese life lent themselves in harmony. The sallow despondency of color without the quarter, changed to frequent surfaces of neglected greens and reds and yellows that once had been vivid and raw, but now grew mingled and softer, stained by weather and darkened by smoke. The tourist, pausing at the dingy window panes, the warped boards, the blackened bricks against which the bright red Chinese paper inscriptions toned, perhaps muttered his shock at the dirt, the dilapidation, the loss. For Kendry, the moment he crossed the dividing line his three invited senses were seized by the unrelieved fascination the quarter had ever held for him. He took to a darker alley, out of his way, but plunging him into the middle of things. It was perhaps the safest place in San Francisco for a white man to be alone if the hour were late, filled though its history was with death and tragedy for its denizens. It had the felicity of leading

into another alley, so that he walked without seeing interminably before him. The squeal of the fiddle, the clash of the cymbals and the rattling of a snake-skin drum, came to him elusively from some upper story, whence no light appeared. The sing-song intonement of the language issued along with smoky smells of muffled interiors. Kendry came back into the main street, thence ascended the hill to the edge of the quarter, and entered a narrow *cul de sac* of no savory reputation. At its blind end he stopped before a wooden structure, which slanted on its foundations in moribund remembrance of another race and of better days. It bore nothing to suggest an occupancy; only the thick grime on the window panes prevented the one street light from shining within. The house was dark, and decayed to a degree where one might on every point consult one's safety before going within. Under the single window next the door was an opening in the sidewalk, closed by wooden gratings. One of these Kendry raised and showed some dusty steps leading to a heavy wooden portal with a tiny opening in it. He had never spoken to any one about this hole. He pushed the blade of his pen-knife into it, and an electric bell rang faintly in the distance. Feet presently scuffled along the cement floor and addressed him in Chinese. Kendry told his name and the feet scuffled away without response.

He waited in patience, breathing the musty odor of the basement, his head on the level of the deserted

alley and his eyes curiously up to the clean, contrasting sky with its stars. The feet scuffled back, the door swung open and Kendry stepped down into the semi-darkness. His guide barred the door and led the way beneath the rotten rafters. They came into a corridor beneath another building. Here the partitions no longer leaned in far decay, but were of newly painted tongue and groove. Stairs led them to a ground-floor corridor, wider and more lighted, with evidences of life and activity which came to Kendry's eyes only in the quick closing of doors as he passed. He crossed a tiny garden surrounded by balconies hung with lighted red silk shellacked lanterns and with a dwarf pine at its center and with Chinese lilies in rusty copper urns. He entered a room of which the walls and ceilings were covered with intricate carvings in red-lacquered wood against red silk. Its chairs and tables were of like carving, their seats and tops of marble. The servant in the two scanty cotton garments, motioned him to ascend the stairs, whence the fumes of opium came, mixed with tobacco smoke and with the deep tones of a man in earnest conversation. Kendry was met there by the great Chan Kow.

Chan Kow moved forward with a smile like that of the sun pictured in its most benevolent mood. His step shook the building. He approached six feet in height and his fleshiness taxed a frame that was heavy in proportion. His head, shaven to the very cuticle save for the roots of his thick cue, was a huge ball

from which his flat nose barely protruded, and which the sockets of his eyes did not noticeably indent. He had started his career clinging to the hand-bars of a Canton man-power river boat, in common with sixty others, who thrust their feet against the treads of the mechanism that revolved its stern-wheel. Now he wore bracelets of costly jade and a ring of jade and gold and a number of garments of sheer silk imported from Peking rather than from Canton. The nails of his little fingers curved out in crescents two inches long. His manner, greeting the son of a friend by whose benefits Chan Kow had enabled his extraordinary rise in America, was that of a prince, for its ease, its urbanity, its confidence in the entertainment his guest would receive.

"You boy—long time no see—what for?" he sang deeply, through his thick lips.

He turned to the little man with sharp eyes and a thin inviting smile, who sat at the table where the two had dined at length, in the intervals between their tobacco and opium. Chan Kow spoke a few words in Chinese which caused the older man to rise and graciously to nod. There was an account book and ink brushes on the table between their chairs; there were long and delicately wrapped Havanas, and a bottle which proved a taste educated beyond the boundaries of the Middle Kingdom. Evidently the two were cronies. Chan Kow led Kendry to a chair and gently pushed him on to it. The big man's affectionate pat on

his shoulder, his standing back and surveying Kendry critically with twinkling eyes, while he offered him refreshment, flattered the young man.

"Your skin pretty good—all same baby," said Chan Kow. "Number one shoulders, all same your fadder," he continued, with fine approval, his face illuminated with paternal kindness. "What you come see old man fathead for?"

"You are a very wise man, Mr. Chan," said Kendry, with confidence, "and I came to find out what you know about a fortune teller named Ah Ma and about a man named Arthur Paulter and about somebody who is making counterfeit dollars in Chinatown."

He could not distinguish the process, but as he spoke there was a transformation of the atmosphere of the room. The eyes of the two Chinese had sought for a brief moment the book between them on the table. Then every sign, either of receptivity, of understanding, or of hospitality, had faded from their faces, like the drowning of a lighted wick. Kendry became intensely aware of the ebony carvings, of the glimmer of the red lanterns of the balcony, of the fact that he was sitting on a chair without a back. The blue smoke of his cigar curled up before the faces of two strangers, whose fixed silence was like that of carvings in wood.

CHAPTER V

A SOURCE OF INFORMATION

As their blankness continued Kendry's abashment verged. Despite the good-will and respect he had always kept for Chan Kow, there figured the racial equation with its burden of some contempt. Moreover, their attitude antagonized his purpose and made him suspect that if they wished to avoid this subject they had a purpose hostile to his own. If it succeeded, they would put him to naught, and he possibly would become ridiculous in the eyes of Mary Eastwood and would merit that charge of immaturity she delighted to convey to him. His resentment determined him to remain as motionless, as expressionless, as they, for as long as they should choose. But he was in a fever, while within the two older men the colder current of a mental process ran. Kendry set his teeth and fastened his eyes on Chan Kow's head, as if to bore a hole into that impressive sphere. Chan Kow's eyes slowly moved along the ebony of the walls, the pale blue bowls of porcelain, the benign image of Kwannon above his altar, to the divan where his smoking-utensils lay. It was a matted surface in an alcove backed by a black silk banner with a gold embroidered

dragon. As Chan Kow went thoughtfully toward the divan, Kendry pondered perforce on the things ironical, sarcastic, coldly superior, he might say to cause vibration in the stilled air. The difficulty of a choice caused him to bring out roundly:

“What’s the matter?”

Chan Kow sat musing on the divan and took no effect from this speech. “Some people say somebody make bad money, Chinatown,” he slowly said, looking out over the balconies. “I don’ know.”

He leaned on his elbow and took up a carved box of gray horn from among many articles chased and inlaid with gold. He began to dabble in it with a smoking needle. “You sit down close,” he pointed to a stool near him. The little man had noiselessly departed by way of the balcony. Chan Kow clapped his hands for his servant, who shut the glass doors to the balcony and closed the door at the foot of the stairs. The old man twirled the needle between his thumb and forefinger and drew forth a sticky mass of opium from the box. He revolved it slowly over the flame of a little nut-oil lamp; the opium bubbled and decreased in size, giving off an agreeable odor as of roasting peanuts. The dim light of the room, its quiet and the appeal to his nostrils, had some soothing effect upon Kendry’s senses.

“Paulter,” Chan Kow murmured to the flame. It proved his dwelling still on Kendry’s queries. The opium had shrunk to the size of a pea. Chan Kow

took up his flat-bowled pipe with the tiny hole at the center. He held the pea to the bowl and the bowl to the flame, then drew three long breaths through the thick ivory mouthpiece. Then he set down the pipe.

"Why you don't like that Paulter?"

"I don't like any man I can't trust," said Kendry, not unwilling Chan Kow should apply this equally to himself.

"What more reason?" said Chan Kow.

"The whole of my reasons would be a little hard for a Chinese to understand," said Kendry, with some coolness.

"*Alors, mon fils, parlez français!*" said Chan Kow. He had spent years profitable to his mind in the French Concession at Shanghai.

"It isn't Chinese and it isn't French, it's myself," said Kendry. "I have something in here"—he tapped his forehead—"it's something like a religion; it's what I believe; what I want to do. And I'm going to do it. When people look as though they'd try to stop me, it boils my heart, Mr. Chan."

Chan Kow tapped his own broad forehead. "Chan Kow too young—eh? Chan Kow *cervelle*: too narrow—eh? No can sabbee?" he smiled.

"I should be more anxious to tell," said Kendry, "if you hadn't blown out the light of your countenance the moment I asked about Paulter. You shut down as if you were some small shopkeeper

and a white man had come to poke into your private affairs."

"All same black heart, eh?" Chan Kow faced him good-naturedly. "Your father—what he did for me?" he said, with sudden intenseness. "S'pose I don't ever knew him—what Chan Kow, this night?" He took up a pinch of tobacco ashes. "Chan Kow that!" he answered deeply, sifting the ashes between his fingers. "I am your friend," he said in the good French he kept for his more serious or more formal moods. The change from the Chinatown English dialect, with its vulgar intonations and its slang, drawn from the streets, lifted him into keeping with his rich surroundings. "When Chan Kow is a friend you have his heart and his pistol to play with. You are without experience of men and their motives. I have not denied you. I was a servant when your father gave me my first thousand dollars. They saved me the best ten years of my life. I was the best servant your father ever had; to get on without me was a greater generosity than the money. *Parlez, mon fils!*"

His straight gaze won Kendry's heart. Kendry began to tell his adventure on the mountain. When he came to his first mention of the girl, Chan Kow exclaimed with deep satisfaction:

"Those cloisonné-blue eyes, that brass hair, that silky skin, that willow waist! Hah!" he nodded.

Kendry continued, mystified. Chan Kow appeared

to be listening; but possibly his thoughts no longer followed so closely the course of the story. His hand strayed to a piece of white chiffon he had noticed on the divan. He held it before his eyes as if to test its translucency. Then he smoothed and folded its oblong shape carefully and stuck into it a hat-pin with an American military button for a head. When Kendry reached the stage of his adventure where he had seen the light in the fog, Chan Kow interrupted, with no great relevance:

"You don't like cloisonné eye, that brass hair, that silky skin, that willow waist!" he asserted.

"But I do!" said Kendry. It vexed him to have these conclusions made before the facts were in. "Since you know her, I'll tell you the idea I have for my career and how it concerns her."

"Miss——?" said Chan Kow.

"I don't know her name and I don't know where she lives; but I'm going to find out," said Kendry grimly. "Moreover——"

Chan Kow held up his hand above his head. "Let Chan Kow talk," he said in French. "Chan Kow has been in many places, up and down the scale of life; he has known many men and many women, of many colors of skin. First, let me write."

He filled Kendry's glass and sat apart for some time, holding in his heavy fingers the brush with which he could make the most delicate variations of line. What he wrote he sealed in a large envelope and kept

in his hand. He came and sat by Kendry and poured himself a glass. He leaned on the table and looked across it with the kindliness of a father.

“I don’t know what you think about how to live,” he said, “but I think all men are made the same inside. It is only the skin and the hair and the language that are different. Jésus talked much about letting every one live in peace; but he was negative about the vital instincts, the natural ambitions that keep the world a-going. If a man is young and lusty Jésus will tell him what not to do; but Confuce will tell him things that he must do—things I don’t think Jésus ever thought much about. Confuce talked sometimes about the positive things men are moved to do by the essence of their being; he talked about family life, about paternal and filial duties. There was a man named Darwin; he was not a Chinaman and not a Jew. He told about the chain of souls and bodies, which comes from somewhere and goes toward somewhere, no one knows, but always with a little change from generation to generation, and this, I think toward a better sort of world. Many nights I have read his writings in a beautiful French translation. Perhaps Jésus and Confuce and Darwin together knew more than any separate one of them. I think that, taken together, they reconcile each other. For Darwin showed you why it is wise to make a beautiful body, and the reward there is in that; he taught that there was visible evidence of a design in the—the

great mystery—I cannot say it well except in my mother's tongue. And Confuce, centuries before him, taught how a design such as that could be worked out with religious zeal by a system of continuous family life; a life which I am sure Jésus would approve of. After death, they will not ask you what kind of motions you made with your hands in the temple; they will not be put off by a showing of candles and incense contributions; they will go down into your deepest essence and your secret heart. Confuce, Jésus, Darwin. I think you will find them all in One—I cannot explain; but sometimes when I am alone, when my eyes look at these walls and do not see them, and my ears do not hear, then it comes into my feeling—into my soul through some unknown avenue, that this is the truth."

Kendry nodded. "It's all something like my idea," he said.

Chan Kow laughed. "When a man is your age, he has but one idea. Your father is dead; you are his only son. This old Chinaman," he came back into the jovial English, "all same your fadder! Some day you come see me, all pink face, all big chest. You tell me: 'I got a wife!—cloisonné eye, brass hair, silky skin, willow waist!—I'm a man!' Then I tell you, 'Not yet a man, my Jack!' Then some more day you come tell me: 'I got a boy—number one boy!—look like me!—ten pound!—I think more fine than other man's baby!'" Chan Kow rose and put his

hand on Kendry's shoulder. "Then I tell you, 'Jack, you're a man!'"

He took a few steps and turned again to Kendry's curious glance.

"Because then you sabbee Confuce," he said; "and then you begin sabbee Darwin; and then you begin catch a soul. Bimeby Jésu take that soul. But this world keep that boy here. This world made o' body *and* soul. You don' get lazy; you got take care both."

He pressed the envelope into Kendry's hand. "Now," he said in French, "you will forgive my sending you off? I have business. You saw that old man with the fox eyes?" he whispered. "I knew him twenty years before I found out, by accident, that he understands English. When you come to see me—not soon," he interjected, tapping the envelope as if it explained this, "please speak French."

He pulled up his silk sleeves and bared his powerful forearm. There were straps buckled to it; they carried steel clips that held a heavy "hatchet"—a weapon forged not unlike a butcher's cleaver. "No one but the son of my friend *knows* that that is there," he smiled. "If that old fox ever sees it, he will not remember! Mebbe some day," he laughed, "I find out him sabbee French lingo!"

He preceded Kendry to the door that opened on the little garden. The servant in the flapping cotton breeches reappeared. Chan Kow remained smiling

in the faint light of the lanterns, ponderous, elegant in his silks and his snowy socks, calmly confident in a purpose that had evolved for him out of their interview. Kendry departed through the corridor; again the rooms closed at his approach and opened when he had passed. At the end of the musty passage, beneath the rotten rafters in the cellar, the servant held the door. Kendry issued into the deserted street. The door and the grating silently closed after him. He made haste out of the uninviting alley to find a light under which he could examine the contents of the envelope.

CHAPTER VI

MEETING A HARD FACT

It was late and it was beginning to rain. Every shop door and window in Chinatown was sealed with wooden shutters. He stood under a street light and sheltered Chan Kow's brush work with his hand. There were but two words in writing. The rest was in the nature of a map, tracing a route from an unnamed point through many streets, by many turns, to a black rectangle labeled, "Ethel Marr."

Kendry was for some moments examining it, till the rain threatened the ink. Some one came up slowly behind him and passed slowly by, almost touching his elbow. It was the little man with the big ears. Kendry set out for his rooms, careless of the drenching he began to undergo. Did this map show the way to the house where lived the girl with the "brass hair, the cloisonné eyes"—and was her name Ethel Marr? That was the plausible explanation of Chan Kow's somewhat too presumptive wisdom. Kendry spread the long brown paper on his table while he was putting on dry garments. It was past midnight, but he had no thought of sleep. He clothed himself for the rain and started out again, for what satisfaction of

his roused hope there might be at such time of night. The route, he could take for granted, began at the entrance to Chan Kow's in the *cul de sac*. It was necessary to return there and follow the streets and passages with care, lest one be missed and the thread be lost.

Every crossing was indicated, each in its proportionate width, by a delicate handling of the brush. The lay of the streets near Chan Kow's fitted the map. The route led him by the quickest way to the top of California Street hill, to where he could see the Eastwood house and its rows of dark windows. It took him down through the Latin Quarter, by a circuit which had kept out of Chinatown at the cost of considerable walking and climbing. It seemed to urge Kendry to avoid Chinatown, eager though Chan Kow might believe him to reach his destination. He picked his way through puddles, with the map fluttering in the glare of occasional electric lights. Night life among the Greeks and Latins had diminished to a few gatherings behind the painted panes of the wine shops, and the wet drizzle swept through lonely thoroughfares. Now he attacked one of the steepest hills in the city, where the grass grew in the center of the uneven street and the sidewalk was of planks, with wooden cleats to give a stable footing. He turned, toward the top, to pass an ascending row of humble wooden houses of a story and a half, each with a short section of level sidewalk, connected with its neighbors by

irregular and uncertain steps. He stumbled up these steps in a rain that was driven under his umbrella by the increased freeway of the wind. The road had never been graded nor known a wagon's wheel; a muddy path wound over its hummocks and projecting boulders. Suddenly, beneath a gaslight, the road was stopped by an iron chain upheld by leaning stanchions, at the edge of a precipice that dropped some two or three hundred feet. He was approaching the end. He went along a narrow path near the edge; it looked over a less frequented part of the water-front, where the slanting downpour hid the masts of the shipping and the gray roofs of the warehouses, and the lights reflected in the ruffled ponds of an unpaved teamway. Close to the brink of this cliff of solid rock and thin stratum of soil, a row of houses stood, of ancient wood, of varied sadness, gloomily, with their backs to the rain. He had met no one since he had left the foot of the hill. He counted the houses from the corner. The fourth was marked on the map, "Ethel Marr."

It was a low gable roof, with a single window in its upper story. Its eaves and the overhang of its narrow porch were festooned with exaggerated jig-saw work that once had been painted green. A single step rose from the path to the veranda with its door and its two French windows. Kendry looked from under his umbrella at a slit of light that came from the second story. It was the only light in the row, which

soon ended at a turn of the cliff. The wind which swung the creaking chain between the stanchions swayed the shade, not quite drawn, against the sash of the half-opened window. That window, Kendry reflected with increased conviction, looked across the bay to the mountain. It made it, for him, more likely that Chan Kow had aided him where his pursuit of the afternoon had brought him to naught. He could hear a voice—that of a woman no longer young—perhaps her mother. He was startled and lowered his umbrella, at the raising of the shade. The light from within glistened on his wet boots. She who spoke was adjusting the window.

“You knew his name and you wouldn’t tell Arthur!” she complained. “You wouldn’t have told him anything if he hadn’t—” The voice ceased and the shadow, whose arms, raising the window, had fallen across the ground where he looked, stayed stationary. Kendry knew that he was being surveyed with more than curiosity; the conviction that this plaintive voice was from the mother of his young woman of the mountain heightened his discomfiture. He drew his umbrella closer to his head and moved off whence he had come, with a relief when he had rounded the corner.

There had been an interval between the older woman’s accusation and the time when a response to it might follow; but there had been no reply. It suited Kendry’s notion as to what part Ethel Marr

would play in a passage where a girl of lighter tongue would have been instantaneous with a sharp rejoinder. Dumb suffering, he believed, would be the characteristic of the girl who had looked upon him with such silent doubt; but a deep current would run within her, capable of rising to one decisive act of resentment. Taking the hour, the mother's words, the girl's silence, Kendry thought he divined the scene within that upper chamber. He ruminated upon it as he balanced on the slippery cleats of the descent. The girl was alone in her abhorrence of Paulter. The mother, with her querulous voice, her smaller figure, held but feeble aims in a world where her daughter, with her youth, her strength, her beauty, must vaguely feel great possibilities. But the man and the older woman spoke to her with authority, in propositions she could refute only by the instinct struggling up from a lonely heart.

The interior, behind that dreary product of hammer and jig-saw, contrasted with the one in which he presently was musing about these things before his fire. His cast of the Pyrrhic Dancers looked from above his mantel across to the few photographs he had selected from the picture galleries of the world. They enjoyed its wide expanse of shadowy tinted wall in a restful change from the turmoil beyond the windows. He drew two other armchairs to the fire, one on either side of him. It suited him to imagine a meeting of Mary Eastwood and Ethel Marr. This given, his planned arrangement would of itself come about, with-

out a stimulating word from him. The soft complete chiseling of Miss Marr's head made other women seem unfinished. To observe the subtleties of its lines was to look into the better future of the race on its way to perfection. Mary, as her friends in town would say, would be "dying" to model her. He agreeably pictured a transaction between the girl and Mary, which should alter all the life of the one and by its benevolent results be a gracious influence on the other. Their actual interview would have to be preceded by no little delicacy in winning the confidence of the mother and of the girl; but he should succeed. He comfortably lay back in his chair. The music of the Pyrrhic Dancers, the remembered essence of the mountain air, the glance from the eyes of Ethel Marr, were of a unity pleasant to contemplate. He sat for a long time looking at Ethel Marr, his hand on the arm of Mary's chair. There came a knock on his door; it was opened by Arthur Paulter.

Paulter's hat was on; a bundle hung on his finger. His eye swept the room, then fixed on Kendry for whatsoever he might choose to say to such a visit. Kendry recovered from his surprise.

"Good evening," he rose, guessing the contents of the bundle. But he had shown his instinctive repugnance at Paulter's type of face, its small bright eyes set forward on high cheek bones, its long nose that began heavily and finished thinly above an unsymmetrical mouth. It was to the recognition of

this, not unexpected, that Paulter replied, with absence of abashment, jerking his explanatory thumb:

"I know the night clerk down there."

He leisurely laid the bundle on the table. "That's your coat," he pointed. "Miss Marr says thank you. If she hadn't got rattled she wouldn't have taken it. I wasn't going to hurt her. And I want you to understand she didn't need any interference from any outsider, and she don't now."

Kendry felt his heart stiffen. There was no mistaking the primitive hostility of the man. Against it he brought forward a civilized diplomacy.

"Thanks for the coat," he said. "It's wet outside; sit down and have something, Mr. Paulter." He wheeled a chair.

"That's just what I won't do!" Paulter came back, without stirring. "But it's what I gambled you'd say to me. Why? Because Ethel Marr is the handsomest girl in California. Take any one of your crowd and load her up with diamonds to the guards; Ethel Marr has got 'em skinned to death!—and you want to get next. That's why you were hanging 'round her house not an hour ago." He noticed Kendry's flush. "I came here to tell you to quit it. It don't take me two minutes to get on to you and your game. Now you just cut it out!" he waved from the wrist.

Kendry held somewhat uncertainly to the back of the chair in front of him.

"What do you think my game is?" he said, as calmly as he could. Paulter laughed in his throat.

"What do I think it is!" You sneaked up in the bushes and heard me say 'Chinatown'—and then you piped me off for a crook. You thought you saw a dead easy graft with that girl; you thought you had *me* off in the wet woods for a few! Well, I'm here, ain't I? And I ain't wearing false whiskers. Tonight you've been nosing 'round Chinatown trying to get wise about none of your business. I'll take care of that. But I want to tell you right now, leave Ethel Marr out of it. Just forget her, and your skin will look prettier when it's mounted."

Kendry's diplomacy thinned. "I don't undertake to forget a young lady for whom I have such an abounding respect," he froze. Paulter immediately sat himself on the corner of the table and swung one leg from it.

"You don't!" he mocked. "I'll tell you something," he pointed two fingers stained with nicotine. "I know your game. You're rotten with money, and you've been around the world and picked up a little bag of tricks you think you can hypnotize a girl with; especially if that girl don't run with your own string. If you can't throw your switch, I'm the man to do it for you!"

Kendry fought back to his first policy. "I say," he demurred, more pleasantly, "don't you think it's a trifle barbarous for you to come to my rooms at this

time of night and assume that I'm a common rounder? Be reasonable!"

Merely anger added itself to Paulter's scorn. "You go to hell!" he breathed, from the corner of his mouth. "Just, by God, as your kind would tell her to go to hell the minute you got tired of her." Kendry held up his hands.

"You don't come within a thousand miles of what I think of Miss Marr," was his disdain. "You ought to treat her name with more respect."

Paulter slid off the table and stepped in front of the bulwark made by Kendry's chair. "I didn't come here to hear you talk," he said, with one high shoulder forward. "I came here for you to hear me talk. That girl don't want to see you. If I catch you 'round her house again, I'll throw you off the cliff."

He stood inviting assault, as he had the night on the mountain, with again his hand thrust in the pocket from which then he had later produced a pistol. Kendry, like most novices in such encounters, blanched.

"If you could," he managed to draw his eye back to Paulter's, "you wouldn't look very well, hanging by that short neck." Paulter leaned back on his heels.

"So?" he chuckled. "How many men have hung for murder in this town for the last ten years? And how many murders a week are there? Why, I'd rather take my chances shooting you than riding on that street-car line you own stock in."

"Do I understand," Kendry said, between his dried lips, "that if you see me approach Miss Marr's house you'll try to kill me?" Paulter surveyed him with pleasurable contempt.

"I guess you do," he said. He turned toward the door.

"Suppose I don't choose to be drawn into a brawl with you," said Kendry; "I could have you put under bonds to keep the peace for that threat."

"I guess you could," said Paulter, his hand on the knob. "But if you get a bond that'll stop a bullet, it'll be the first one ever issued in this part of the world. I've said enough to suit me. If you want to ride down Telegraph Hill, walk up."

He stopped to search the effect of this nonchalance. It appeared to satisfy him. Through the mist of his anger, Kendry detected an advantage in that. It made him respond, after a moment:

"I'll think over what you've said, Mr. Paulter."

Paulter waited, weighing this speech. It was non-committal; but he confronted a man who, by youth, by tastes, and by experience, was not his equal in such a broil. He gave a noiseless laugh; his footsteps died out in the corridor.

Kendry stayed holding to the leather top of his chair. It did not soothe him that he had sacrificed as little of his pride as had been possible. If he had started to throw the man out of the room, he was certain that he would have been held back at the pis-

tol's point and humbled to a degree he could not bear to think of. To rush in and to be shot by such ignominious hands, would have been folly for a man who believed in his own value as a living being and in his capacity, in the end, to overcome so limited a mind as Paulter's. But Kendry gripped his chair with the anguished hardening of a knot about his heart. He wanted a nobler adversary. Why should there be in the world such a quantity as Paulter? Why should such a worthless strain, struggling to survive through a girl of a type so indispensable to the world's betterment, be gifted with such reckless intensity?

He could not sleep. The incongruousness, the unfairness, of Paulter's interjection, smote him in the exposed spot, the helpless side a man of more delicate perceptions cannot defend from rude antagonism. It had crashed in on his rich dream by the fireside, his gentle hopes engendered by the great idea. Then he had felt that he had brought home with him something of the spirit of the mountain, of its bracing breeze, its scented zephyrs, its grand aloofness from the common wants. Now the room echoed with the vulgar laugh of an odious, implacable interloper, who jeered at every principle John Kendry revered. He looked at the Pyrrhic Dancers, but he could no longer enjoy them. Something of the City stood between; the City that was any city. It groveled on the shore, separated by the tide from those loftier slopes. It secreted the poison of a packed death struggle of the myriads for

the least enduring of the world's rewards. It protruded its venomous tongue at him, vaunting a permanency equal to that of the hills.

He paced the floor, casting up the account of his hopes. He was not certain that Mary Eastwood ever would love him. He was not certain that Ethel Marr ever would confide in him. He was not certain that her mother ever would receive him. The only thing certain was, that to-morrow he should present himself at the house on the brink.

CHAPTER VII

THE HOUSE ON THE BRINK

AFTER the long sleep that finally came Kendry arose less irritated. Night and darkness appeared the stronger elements in Paulter's threats. The north wind—through a morning sky the rain had washed off every suspended particle—put optimism in Kendry's heart. When, on his way to Telegraph Hill he passed a pawnshop window, full of deadly weapons, they made more ridiculous the thought of arming himself. He could not believe that a man would confront him with a pistol in the open street without preliminaries during which, now that he knew Paulter's confirmed hatred of him, the odds would be even. With Ethel Marr once persuaded across Mary Eastwood's threshold it never would be necessary for Kendry to approach Telegraph Hill again, or indeed, if he strictly maintained the impersonal character of his interest in Miss Marr, for him to see her again. At Mary's she would discover the current on which she gently might voyage to a broader, brighter life; and by a gradual process Paulter, unable to follow her, would disappear. It was improbable that Paulter would lie in wait for him at noon; and that hour would give to

Kendry's visit the business aspect he wished her mother to note. Those minds to which it would have seemed heroic for him to seek, for the emblazonment of his history, a violent encounter with Paulter at Miss Marr's door never would have conceived the idea that was bringing him there. No such meeting, howsoever disastrous to Paulter, could be so sanely satisfactory or so helpful to Kendry's plans as an easy avoidance of him. Kendry approached the steep through a busy street on made ground that in the days of '49 had been bay anchorage for the Argonauts. From the beacon point of those times the hilltop had been changed to a Sunday resort in a garden surrounded by a wall. The promise it once had for becoming a fashionable quarter had vanished before its crowds, its beer and the growth of Chinatown near one foot of it. Its Sunday vogue had diminished, the long glass roof of its casino had stayed a dead landmark, from the waters of the Gate the wall had crumbled. The casino had gone the way of all wood and glass in a nocturnal glory of huge flames lighting many miles of land and water. Now its site lay waste and the rest of the hill was inhabited almost entirely by Italians.

Its pines and cypresses surviving in the garden, its remnants of coping, its stiff inclines and changing foreground, gave some reminiscence of the motherland. Many of the houses were of wood unpainted, warping in the sun; two of its sides had been torn to

abrupt declivities by graders and quarrymen; it was like a stage Italy, unfortunately seen by daylight and lacking in reality. Silent night dressed it with an enormous background of stars and glinting water and silhouettes of far mountains against the rising moon; and it sank to mere vantage point. But on a gusty morning after a rain Kendry's eyes were held by the scattered weeds, the uncovered yellow wounds in the earth, the musty spaces of gloom beneath the underpinnings of houses that, roof by sill, with intermingling ashes and débris, scrambled up from the noise and ugliness and neglect of the water front.

Perhaps it was the scene that depressed Kendry; perhaps it was something weighing on his subconsciousness. He saw no man. The flat spaces were full of young children who smiled up to him, playing unguarded at the edge of the cliff. He followed the chain rail along the brink and stood before the house of Mrs. Marr and her daughter. Its inner silence and the swept area before it distinguished it from the rest; but the curtains at the French windows on either side of the door were of cheap Nottingham, the knob hung loose, the faded jig-saw work was blistered and broken. It was not the house of two women who lived better than their neighbors in a mean street. A calico gown eyed him with curiosity from the next house. The sound of his feet on the veranda disconcerted him. There were several outcomes possible to this uninvited visit. He paused. He could not bring in

his great idea through that narrow portal and set it naked for her mother to revere: her mother would not understand, or understanding would not believe; so the little that he knew of her persuaded him. Without warning the door opened and he felt himself under the suspicion in two eyes of faded gray.

"Is Miss Marr in?" he said. He saw a woman who never had been beautiful, but who once had been pretty and doll-like. He felt that she divined who he was. Her undecided mouth and chin worked as if consuming in silence a weak tendency to yield up the truth.

"Miss Ethel Marr," Kendry defined, more for the affability he hoped she might contract from him. Her glance, from a silvered head smaller and narrower than her daughter's, refused to return to Kendry. Involuntarily she swung the door a little against him. She turned for a doubtful look up steep stairs that finished close behind her. An answer seemed forced from her.

"I don't think so," she said.

There was a decided step at the upper landing. Kendry saw two shoes and the girl's familiar skirt, then a revelation of her waist, her shoulders, her mouth, her compelling eyes. They rather startlingly reminded him that the girl who dwelt so romantically on his impersonal fancy was of flesh and blood. Against the low ceiling and beside the smaller woman who leaned back with a faint irrelevant smile, Ethel Marr loomed

not quite as the docile spirit his imagination had come to picture her. She was under her own roof and it might have been evident that she was prepared for the situation she was taking in hand. Kendry, in a man's surrender to her softly vital presence, fell from self-confidence. He laughed rather helplessly to her in the brief moment while the girl's look met and vanquished the will of her mother.

"You've come to acknowledge your coat," said Miss Marr. "That was more than I expected. You must come in. This is Mr. Kendry, mother."

There was a door at either side of the foot of the stairs. Mrs. Marr smiled queerly from the threshold of the one whose knob she grasped.

"I know how irregular this seems. I shall explain it to you," he hastened engagingly to say to her. The lady kept fading away from him. Miss Marr opened the opposite door, breaking the silence. Automatically he completed his separation from her mother. He found his head near the ceiling of a square room he could have crossed in three strides. It contained too much heavy furniture upholstered in vivid blue and yellow plush. There was a wax cross in a glass case above the mantel and there was a heavy bible on a table of its own. Sea shells flanked the meager fireplace, and yellowed family photographs in round walnut frames hung against the cold blue figures of the wall paper. It made her the more wonderful when she closed him in and stood, in her straight

gaze at him, her fine completeness of contour, as incongruous with these surroundings as he was himself.

"Shall I hope to have your mother hear what I've come for?" said Kendry. Her eyes widened in the way he had so remarked on the mountain side; her mouth compressed and she threw open the door to the entry. It disclosed her mother, again with her hand upon the knob across the way, her glance unwillingly held on Kendry. Miss Marr did not turn to see the effect of her act. "I have no secrets from my mother," she said colorlessly. The elder woman's cheek reddened; she coughed and hurried up the stairs. Miss Marr seemed to go on in a plain statement of fact, unmixed with emotion; but it was forcing a physiognomy molded to frankness and feeling. "She thinks that any not unfavorable impression I may have had of you was based on my inexperience, my credulity," she said. "She thinks you've come to ask us questions about Mr. Paulter."

The door remained open; he was not sure that Mrs. Marr's flight had continued beyond the head of the stairs. Through the girl's mute exterior Kendry saw her keen hope that he might prove what would justify her and confound her mother. It marked the end of her self-possession. He delightedly took hold.

"Suppose that I never ask you any question remotely connected with Mr. Paulter?" he said. Her mouth curved roundly at the corners; but she checked the breath she had caught.

"Shall you not?" she held him to the letter. Yet something that had endured through the hours of their meeting in the chaparral now was already melting before his full responsiveness.

"I shall not," he said. "I'm a messenger to you from Mary Eastwood, the lady who models in clay. She wishes to know if you will sit for her—for a bust, in return for a substantial acknowledgment. It's *the* Eastwood family. You'll sit comfortably in a pleasant house and talk to Miss Eastwood. She's a woman of much accomplishment. From time to time all the interesting people in town drop in there—which of course shuts me out," he playfully added. "Should you think of turning your time into money, nothing else would be quite so cheerful or so remunerative."

She followed him with the pleased wonder of a young child.

"I don't see why she wishes to model *me*?" she laughed.

"That's an embarrassing question," said Kendry, much at ease. "I'm not used to telling a girl in one heroic dose that she's beautiful: it's too important a fact. I generally try to suggest it to her homeopathically. So I'm afraid you'll have to ask Miss Eastwood." He was not the man of forty he aimed to be and he could not responsibly gauge the quality of her young receptive gaze. Some cloud presently gathered on her horizon.

"She's seen me?" she brought him up.

"Not with her own eyes, yet," he was forced to say. "But I've described you to her. I've been a good deal with her in the galleries in Europe. I understand her tastes."

"You told her all about our meeting?" she flushed. "You told her everything?" He kept nodding cheerfully.

"Perhaps not all I heard, but all I saw," was all he could say for her pride.

"She didn't think I was—queer?" Miss Marr pursued, lifting her eyes.

"How could she!" said Kendry. "I described you to her."

"And you didn't think I was—queer?" she came, accusatively. Her head dropped toward him, accentuating the importance of it. Her eyes widened at his reply:

"Just your entrance into a room would say, 'No,' to that; merely your presence would prevent the question. I hope you'll at once answer favorably to a letter that's coming from Miss Eastwood?" After a moment she slowly shook her head.

"It wouldn't prevent it in *her* mind," she said. "I should be a mystery to her. I couldn't be anything else. One couldn't lay one's whole story bare for her," she found it hard to say. "One doesn't count on its being laid half bare by an accident. One—" she searched, "one doesn't know what to do about it."

He was under arraignment for having confided so

much about her to Mary Eastwood. Yet he agreeably felt, and not knowing why, that without too much reluctance she was yielding him the place chance had given him through their episode.

"All sorts of things are solved by complete frankness," Kendry alluringly filled the void. "You are too magnificent, if you please, to go on as you are. I want to change all that, in a way to please you; but I, myself, can't do it, in the social nature of things. So I want you to know Mary. I'd have said this the moment I entered the house, if I hadn't been afraid that you'd doubt the personal equation—that you wouldn't believe that the obligation will be not in the least yours, but hers and mine. I'm full of my big idea. I shall never know quite how much of it I owe to myself and how much I owe to having waked up to look so comfortably at you."

He stirred with a happiness in saying this. She had been held fascinated by his kindly simplicity. Her striving to match him was with some loss of steadiness.

"I haven't been urged to believe you. Even if I had been—" she stopped and looked at the little frayed spot in her skirt, then at the harsh colors that seemed to drive the two young people at each other. "I happened to hear Miss Eastwood give her name in a shop once, when she was ordering some lace," she began again. "She'd come here, some day. She'd wonder why I haven't made my compromise;

why I haven't given something of myself to this room; why I'm quite without such people as might visit me. She wouldn't understand that I can't be pathetic; I couldn't sit down to the mockery of accepting my situation in life. If she found me in a mood to smash it all, without counting the cost, I should fatigue her, I should frighten her. We should end in politeness."

"Ah, but you have your impression from Mary's exterior!" he glowed. "She is a bit like a Gothic cathedral; but you'd penetrate to the high altar, behind the railing. And you'd be quite as good for her as she'd be for you. You must come," he smiled. "Fate requires it."

He thought he had convinced her. Her look fell before his steadfast will; she tapped her fingers. He imagined a jewel on one of them, of deep reflecting blue.

"Didn't Mr. Paulter," she halted him, "didn't he threaten you if you came here?" It made him survey her more inquiringly.

"Had he the least right?" he asked, the one assurance lacking.

"No—no!" was her rich vehemence, her eyes dilating. "I only wish you to know why I'm sitting here with the key of the street door; why I fled from you yesterday into the morgue."

"I drove you into the morgue?" Kendry gasped.

"I had come from the police headquarters, about the robbery; I had discovered the morgue across the

way. There was the body of a girl there, who had shot herself. It fascinated me. I kept looking at her, trying to believe that things could get so bad for one as that."

"They can't," Kendry shuddered. "You must come to Miss Eastwood's," it made him say. There was a shudder, too, behind her thoughts.

"I should like to hear you say that you will avoid Mr. Paulter."

"I don't intend to seek him out," said Kendry. She shook her head.

"That isn't enough. It's too wretched for me, if you please, to think that it might be the beginning of a tragedy. I'm too much alone. I can't stand up under any more weight. You mustn't let any generous impulse bring you to this neighborhood——"

She was on her feet at the sound of a step outside. There was a hearty whistle and a drumming on the street door. Kendry heard her mother hurrying down the stairs. The girl threw open the door at the back of the room; she paled with the bending of her will to control him.

"This way," she whispered. His impulse was to yield to what would calm her; but he stood still.

"Don't let me go as I came," he said. "I don't know how to run away."

"Won't you please," she pleaded. She was not aware of her mother, of a look from her of disap-

proval and of anxiety. They heard the door knob tried, then a tattoo on the panel. The girl came and held her hands out to him. "You *must* come," she said.

He followed her through the dining room. He had a glimpse of white plates and of plaid napkin rings, of a sewing machine and a canary bird, of a hanging shelf stuffed with old magazines. She hastened to throw open the French window that led into the rear yard. They heard Paulter jocularly summoning some one to arise and let him in. Its familiarity added to Kendry's annoyance.

"I shall have to meet him and have it out with him," he was forced to follow her to say. They were in a barren inclosure that might have been a green garden. She shook her head.

"There isn't anything to have out," she kept along. "There'll be nothing to bring us together again. I shall not go to Miss -Eastwood." She pushed her hair from her heated cheek. The opening of the gate in the boarding completed the vexatious contrast for Kendry. She stood straight and breathless, invincible in her helplessness, for a young man with red blood in his veins. The background was to him a blur of weeds, of blackened boards, of the crude colors flapping from near-by clothes lines. "I haven't seemed grateful, but I am." She offered her hand. It was the passing of all her doubt. The current through their fingers came out of her inner conscious-

ness, indifferent as to time, place, circumstance. It was indifferent as to any man's great idea. Over her shoulder he saw her mother at the window, palely fixed on them. He could have drawn Ethel Marr through that gate; he could have closed out the face and the tattooing on the street door for her forever.

"You must come!" he gripped her hand, all masculine. "*I want you to come.*"

His thrill marveled within him even when he reached the plane. It was because now he should be able to make Mary feel it as he felt it, he told himself. It was because in that stirring of her generosity the current he counted on to bring her to himself would be set flowing. Then should the idea have justified itself, to his heart and to his world.

His pleasant glow of recollection of the moment at the gate kept returning, as if there were even more beauty in it than he had yet fathomed.

But he was not a girl, locked in a low ceiled room with a window through whose curtains showed the canting telegraph poles down below an ugly precipice amid the rusty jetsam of a freight railway. She lay for hours, again and again going over that scene where so luminously, so magically he had created an atmosphere as of the great romantic alluring world.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME INDICATIONS

HE announced to Mary that if Ethel Marr came to her Miss Marr should be able to say that she did not see him at the Eastwoods. He received from Mary the message: "She's come," and for three weeks he was treated to no further information. After enough time should elapse to establish for Mrs. Marr the detached benevolence of his motives he counted on the pleasure of an occasional glimpse of his young woman; and meanwhile he had expected Mary, in his weekly visit, to be interesting with some report of progress. His first opportunity to hear Mary speak had been clouded by the presence of others, save for a moment. It was a moment Mary created and could have created sooner, he thought, and have held longer. She had made no use of it, as he had taken for granted she spontaneously would, to come at once to the affairs of her model. When on his second visit they were alone and Mary had responded: "She comes regularly," and had passed to subjects more of her own intimate concern, Kendry had waited patiently for her to return to Ethel Marr. That she did not set him pondering. It was his opportunity to show mature

restraint of his wonder why Mary took so to the letter his disclaimer of the personal with Miss Marr. On his third visit he lived up to this opportunity, just as he maintained his resolve not to broach the personal between himself and Mary. His success gratified but did not enliven him. It was not the Mary with whom he discussed the crudities of a young democracy that kept him going; it was the Mary whom he imagined blossoming some day into new being under the all-developing influence of a passion for himself. Around her he had assumed the starting point for what the idea was to accomplish for Miss Marr. It was to keep her buoyed till some large event—which he quite blankly left the future to compose—should establish her happiness.

It made an interval his other preoccupations could not deprive of dullness and vacancy. The sight one evening of the little man with the great ears, whom he suspected of knowing Paulter, caused Kendry to follow him into that frescoed restaurant. Close self-examination would have shown that Kendry hoped to hear something about Paulter and from this something that would touch on Miss Marr. The little man sat down at the table where again the Pole and the mariner were dining. As Kendry joined them he saw at the back of the room Paulter, at a table with some women. He sat with his back to Paulter and found the Pole and the sailor in disconsolate moods. Kendry brightened their meal with wine and with good

tobacco. It brought forth some of their history. The little man's name was Collins; he kept recurring to the counterfeit dollars, insinuating that a gentleman of Kendry's force and power was ready to look into that matter of public concern and would accept the assistance of the two across the table. They said that their time was too taken by their private struggles. The Pole had five children, dwelling in a cellar. One of them or another was always ill. Once a week he sat up for the night, that his wife might sleep consecutive hours. Once a week he extravagantly dined for fifty cents at this restaurant, and saw the world. He was born to think, not to labor with his hands, he said, shrugging at his pricked fingers. His one great act, in addition to his writings, for which the world was not yet ripe, would be to kill some representative plutocrat. It was only thus that the rich could be made to fear and to scatter their wealth. The sailor gruffly dubbed him a damned anarchist.

The sailor was altered and worn. He just had been going to forsake the sea. He had been going to have a home—and something more, which Kendry guessed was not masculine. He had bought into a schooner and the schooner was returning from Tahiti with another three thousand dollars added to his interest in her. She would be returning from Tahiti, till hell froze over. His three partners had juggled the insurance, there was nothing left for him. A sailor was like a seal, he said: he couldn't live always

in the water ; and, when he came ashore to make his nest, they had him skinned before he was cold. It was "up to the rich—always up to the rich," the Pole said, echoing his hollow laugh. Collins kept covertly ridiculing them in a way that sought ingratiation with Kendry.

The sailor pointed his red hand past Kendry to one whose face he said it would soothe his soul to change to smash. Did they know that man Paulter? He had taken Paulter's gun from him one night at Port Costa. Paulter was a youth then and had received back his revolver, minus the lead, and had been kicked landwards. Paulter was a crony of the three who had just flim-flammed him.

The Pole knew him. It was a story about a girl from Bialystok, arriving without friends and with little knowledge of the language. Not the fat-faced pudding, with two currants for eyes, who was serving her proper destiny beside him to-night; no, a little girl with a wonderful lighting-up of the face and made of credulity—in the wisdom of our Father in Heaven—and with no friends. Paulter also did business with that diminutive Ting Lee, with the wire muscles pulling his thin skin and with the ugly cicatrix under his chin—Kendry remembered the Chinaman he had met for a few moments at Chan Kow's. Ting Lee was the richest man in Chinatown, wherefore he could have no soul—not even a Chinese soul.

The sailor demurred. The richest Chinaman was Chan Kow, who lived in a house without an entrance from any street. The sailor knew a few things. He had talked with an ex-detective, who had started honestly to clean out Chinatown and was now in Shanghai—a life of racing-ponies and sing-song girls—money like water. Chan Kow, he heard, had a harem that would chorus a grand opera—white women preferred. God made the world! He kicked back his chair in disgust for all existence. The Pole translated him; it was “up to the rich, always up to the rich!” Together the incongruous pair left the restaurant, registering queerly on Kendry’s mind. Collins proposed that Kendry join him, for the good of civilization, if Kendry believed Paulter was connected with the counterfeiters in Chinatown, and clean out that gang. He had made a guess, he said, at what Kendry had been doing in that quarter. The proposal was one Kendry could not answer without throwing more intimate a light upon himself. He ignored it, contemplating the shifty eyes under Collins’ shaggy brows. He likened Collins, inwardly, to some bad cross with a persistent strain of Skye terrier. At this moment Kendry’s shoulder was rudely countered from the rear and the wine in his raised glass sent wetting his fingers. Paulter passed. Kendry stared and was himself stared at tensely with expectation by Collins and by those at the adjoining tables.

The powdered woman who had preceded Paulter

waited for him at the cashier's desk. Her eyes fixed with patent approval upon Kendry, unaware of what had happened. Paulter turned as if to afford Kendry full opportunity, his confident smile drifting for a moment to Collins. There was a hush at the near tables; when Paulter leisurely let his companion out on to the street the hush rose to a whisper of comment.

Kendry continued looking at space until at length people ceased to look at him. He did not listen to one or two remarks of examinative Collins, intended to be sympathetic. Soon Collins rose.

"I admired your nerve, Mr. Kendry. He's a dangerous man."

"So am I. Go to the devil!" said Kendry. It fairly represented his state of mind. He did not intend to be drawn into a public brawl with the time and circumstance neatly prearranged by the enemy. But how great an affront was a man to let pass, no matter what his reasoning? That question sufficiently depressed him. He recognized in his calculating restraint an inherited trait that had helped to make his father a successful man. But had this been present in his father at twenty-four? The more direct, impulsive surrender to anger seemed at that moment a sure sign of the honest, the all-wholesome human. Kendry had compounded his conflicting impulses and the logical faculty had prevailed. But that laid it upon him to prove, if but for his self-respect, a greater, finer purpose in life than the world would be

quick to believe. He would prove it. The encounter with Paulter went down into the bottle and remained there, corked and exerting a pressure that hurt him. The hurt was his sacrifice to the cause of the idea and to the peace of a gentle girl. At Mary's she must have found comfort and thus have added to Paulter's jealous fears. After to-night Paulter would proceed in confidence that a closer approach, a word, would cause John Kendry's son to quail. Kendry went home. It was unnecessary for him ever to dine there again, even if the place had suited his taste.

He thought he conquered the pressure in the bottle, by reflection, by philosophy. But if he drove in the cork the tighter, the effort was taken up somewhere in his subjective consciousness. It was not pleasant to be embroiled with a man of Paulter's type. It added to the flatness, the next day, of his knowing nothing through Mary.

He sat in his office with his agent when the door opened to a heavy, moon-faced Chinaman of striking height, clad in a coarse blue tunic and funnels. The Chinese kept on his slouch hat and sat at a distance, blankly holding a bundle tied in a cloth, his heels on the rung of a chair. It amused Kendry not to pay him attention till the agent had gone.

"*Qu' est ce qu' il te faut, mon Dieu!*" said Chan Kow. "They say this Paulter vows to kill you. It is enough to steal that lovely brass hair from him. Why not leave alone his business affairs?" His

French, rippling from those thick lips, was endlessly a marvel.

"If you know him, tell him I'm not touching his business affairs," said Kendry. "And tell him I'm not in love with Miss Marr." Chan Kow put down his bundle.

"Then what?" he searched.

"I'm trying to improve the conditions of her life, to add to her opportunities, to——"

"*Mais, oui, oui!*—why?" said Chan Kow.

"For the pleasure it will give me to see such a beautiful girl living a beautiful life," said Kendry. Chan Kow stared at him over his broad nose.

"No sabbee," he said at length. "What religion? What good for *you*? At your time of life such thoughts should go for a wife."

"The lady I want to marry doesn't need them," said Kendry. It seemed to him a confidence as safe as if he had told it to the sea. "She has everything."

"Except a husband," said Chan Kow. "Marry her and go to Paris—ah, Paris!—to-morrow!"

"But you see," Kendry laughed, "the lady, at present, doesn't wish to marry—any one." Chan Kow contemplated him.

"If a girl does not yearn for a lover, a husband, a child, she is too old or too young, or too thin in the blood," he said. "Do not consider yourself too sufficient where nature fails. What color? What eyes? I think the brass hair is strong, in her willow waist

and in the pumping of her heart. How old, this other?"

Kendry reflected that there had been no need for opening his confidence. "She's thirty-one," he had to continue.

Chan Kow might have been showing commendable indifference to a glass of water accidentally thrown in his face. Presently he smiled and opened his hands.

"It is not the business of a *cochon de Chinois!*" he said. "Let us get on to the question of your life. A lover dead is of little worth even to a woman of thirty-one. You must shoot this Paulter or put him in jail. Which?"

"Jail!" said Kendry. "I don't like to judge when a man ought to die, especially at the moment he's judging when I ought to die. I might bias him. Is Paulter the chief counterfeiter, then?" Chan Kow mused, looking at him.

"Come to the theater—the Chinese theater, to-night," he said. "Come in a carriage. If possible, bring ladies. In the front row observe a fat rhinoceros-faced Chinaman, something like Chan Kow."

"*Mais, oui, oui, why?*" said Kendry. He wondered why Chan Kow had come so unnoticeably dressed; he remembered seeing him abroad in silks and in a cap with a button.

"Not to understand Chinatown, *mon fils,*" the old man smiled; "you are an Occidental. But to see such

things as concern you. You have mentioned Paulter to the authorities?" He watched Kendry's eye.

"I haven't enough cause to," said Kendry. "Have you?"

Chan Kow looked out over the roofs. "The lovely willow waist—how old?" he pondered. "About twenty, I think." He thoughtfully produced from his bundle a piece of jade that grew on Kendry's admiration. It was easily two pounds in weight and of remarkable depth of color. It was carved with unusual vigor for a Chinese workman, in the image of a snarling dragon. "Of more value than you must quote connected with my name," Chan Kow smiled. "But of no value compared to your father's friendly deeds for me. I thought of it surrendering to those blue eyes of twenty—of it turning to turquoise for them. Will it go well as your gift to the demoiselle of thirty-one—a trifle discovered in Chinatown?"

"If you pictured it in Miss Marr's possession, I shouldn't think of its going elsewhere," said Kendry.

"You are a stranger; you do not wish to marry her," Chan Kow corrected. "Even according to the far western code, it would be questionable. Shall I send it to the thirty-one, with your card?"

"I do think it would please her; she's a woman of the finest appreciations." To this Chan Kow grunted. Kendry wrote the Eastwood address on the back of his card, his mind trying to make something of the mystery in which his Chinese friend forever moved.

It baffled him; the only thing projecting through the veil was the old man's friendship for the son of his benefactor. On the filling of the doorway by Henry Eastwood, Chan Kow's face faded from expression.

"You no wanchee?" he squeaked, pointing to his bundle.

"No wanchee," Kendry said, acting the part thus suggested to him. Chan Kow slouched into the corridor without looking behind him. If he knew so much about Paulter, Kendry thought, it was strange if he did not know more.

Eastwood spoke from an unaccustomed languor. "When do we talk over that office building, for you and Mab?" he began.

"I'm only waiting for Mary to broach it," said Kendry.

"Is that your notion of getting on with women?" Eastwood shook his head.

"When they know what they want," Kendry nodded.

"My boy, they never know what they want," Eastwood livened. "They expect you to tell 'em that. That's why I'm here. Never mind business. It is Miss Marr," he let out, with a preparatory glance. "You ought to come up to the house." He shook his head again. Kendry laughed.

"Your dog won't bark at me now," he said.

"Once a week won't do, my boy!" Eastwood burst, bringing his hand down on the desk. "Now

don't think I'm fussing about Mab," he smiled heartily, "'cause I'm not. But let me hand you out something as a brother might; not advice, but example. While you are humming and hawing with Mab in your exalted Harvard way, I'm going to marry Miss Marr."

A thrill tore through Kendry, of more elements than he could define.

"Has she?" he gasped. Eastwood threw up his hands.

"Give the young lady a chance!" he cried. "I've just discovered it myself. I've been off my feed for a week—couldn't sleep, loose in the waistband, couldn't eat—I haven't done a stroke of business for seven days," he pronounced, in awe of his condition. "Just now I came around a corner and there was Miss Marr. It nearly knocked me—all in the solar plexus—pin-wheels in the diaphragm. I went off and had a quiet drink and diagnosed my case. I've always been afraid," he mused, "that I should be waylaid by some conventional, tailor-made, pocket-handkerchief young party from Mab's choice bunch—when I wasn't looking. *But*, it was just the happy little contrast that set me off; and now, that's where you come in. I may be wrong; but I believe that Mab has been quietly sand-papering that girl from the moment she entered the house. Not when I'm around; Mab's as civil as a door-knob to her then: 'Ring and I'll see if anybody's in!' Now if Mab has taken that tack—why? Just rap your nut and think why!" he wisely grimaced.

"But I can't," said Kendry. "Any one so mild and sweet and charming——"

"Who? Mab?" said her brother.

"Of course," said Kendry; "but I was thinking at the moment of Miss Marr."

"Well, stop thinking of Miss Marr, unless you want to chuck Mab altogether—which you've a perfect right to do. If you've been trying to make Mab look up, it's time to come and notice results. You've not said a word to her about Miss Marr for two weeks—I got that out of Mab. She also implies that you are losing your fizz. Of course she thinks you see Miss Marr at her own house; and I've let her think so, though I know better. Now mother invites you to dine with us to-night; and if you have an engagement, smash it! For either one or the other of those girls is going to blow up to-night—mark me. Toddle up early, with that nice little deep-water ripple of yours that sets 'em thinking. Have a go with Mab before Miss Marr arrives. That Telegraph Hill will be an awful lot of leg work for me, if Miss Marr chucks us."

"We'll go to the Chinese theater, afterward," said Kendry.

"It's your say." Eastwood snatched his hat. "The show at our house can't ring up without you. But I say," he stopped at the door, "you ought to go up and watch the peacocks at the Park, about this time of year. *Pau!*"

CHAPTER IX

A GENERAL ENGAGEMENT

KENDRY was stimulated, as he was announced at the threshold of the studio, at seeing prominently on one of the pedestals the cast of Donatello's head of a boy of about three years old, which they admired together abroad. He had given it to her on leaving for America and now saw it again for the first time. The studio was the familiar large room at the rear, little transformed for the speckless arrangement of Mary's tools and clay. A dozen other pedestals held casts by her own hand, which, if they lacked characteristics of their own did not lack characteristics of Mary. She came forward with her finger-tips for him and her smile in which amusement at him always seemed to lurk.

"You're to sit and look at this portrait," she showed him a bas-relief. "And there's a reason why you should find it interesting. I'm going to make a lightning head of you, meanwhile." She went silently to work, at once. He stared at the bas-relief and any excitement he had derived from the visit of her brother cooled away. Instead he felt a little burning spot of rebellion; he felt a degree ridiculous, posing thus. It

the more decided him not to be the first to cross the line of the personal. That was to reward him and strengthen a tactical sense in him with regard to Mary. For the present he brought his mind to the bas-relief and became interested in it.

"This is a good departure," he said. "It has a new quality—one I haven't detected in your work before."

"And the likeness?" Mary said, without looking at him.

"Is it myself?" he asked, with some hesitancy. Mary laughed.

"She wouldn't like that. She's been scratching at it for weeks."

"Miss Marr?" said Kendry. "But—this is important. This is delightful. It's a career for her." He stood up.

"That's better," said Mary, waiting for him to regain his pose, "when one considers that she may be here and hear you, at any moment."

"But I'm not familiar with my profile," said Kendry. "I never see it except in the tailor's glass, and then I'm hating the tailor. I fancy the likeness is good."

"And all from memory," said Mary. She held up her stick estimating the length of his nose. "What an impression you must have made on her, in *two* interviews." She indicated the bas-relief. "It was my way of preventing her from talking me to death

about you. Mother says you really ought not, you know." She stopped and looked at him. Kendry pricked up his ears. *

"But I never see Miss Marr," he demurred. "If she thinks I'm a matter of interest to you, it's because I've made her think you are one to me. Come."

"O, you *are* a matter of interest to me." She let her irony weigh lightly in her tone, while her own profile came under examination. "She'll soon be here," said Mary comfortingly. "She'll take her hat off outside and bring it into the room in her hand, because her hair is real and her hat is an imitation." At which she colored as if the speech echoed unpleasantly to her.

"Well, dear Mary," Kendry nodded to the bas-relief, "her hair always will be real, but her hat won't always be imitation."

"Is that an announcement?" said Mary, in the voice of detachment. "If it is," she turned to him, "I don't know what Henry will say. Mother's been trying to nurse him through with this; but I haven't yet dared to tell him that Miss Marr has decided to give up being a model. She's going to work in a paper-box factory, to-morrow."

Kendry's surprise and chagrin did not come to his tongue. He looked at the bas-relief; he thought of Eastwood's surmises. He wondered why she did not show the bust she had been making of Miss Marr; he wondered if the green dragon had not yet arrived.

Mary was growing ever more mysterious. Was she adding to the wall between them that he might the more determinedly knock it down? Perhaps she was thinking of him as she worked on. The room was quiet, the light was growing subdued, save at the window beyond her. Her movements, her thin erectness, her trim costume untouched by a sign of her occupation—they made, not a finished picture, but a beginning whereon her romantic awakening would fill out every lacking line. He imagined her turning to him with some whole-hearted admission by which, for once, she stood at the mercy of his kindness. It gave a softer look to her alert eyes; it took out certain shallows at her temples and beneath the corners of her mouth. He imagined her saying: "I have always believed in your idea; I believe in it now; I believe in you!" He turned to find himself absorbed in the quiet gaze of Ethel Marr from where she had come lightly on to the rug at the threshold. He jumped up, bearing the precious bas-relief.

"This is a promise," he said. "You mustn't go back on it! I beg of you."

She was at loss; she flushed and it slurred her greeting to her hostess. "I mean that it points the way to your career," he said, as she faced him, with her hat in her hand. With some confusion she dropped the hat behind a chair-back. He remembered seeing it disappear around a street corner, on its way to the morgue.

"You mean I ought to model?" she said.

"It will open the world to you," said Kendry. "You'll have an *atelier*; you'll have a *salon*; you'll become famous."

She shook her head. "That is only a *tour de force*," she said, glancing at her work. "I couldn't do anything else; I couldn't do even that again. I watched you for a long time wondering if you were dead. Your face was the color of clay. It wasn't very wonderful that it should cut into my memory." She glanced at Mary Eastwood. "I was very frightened."

Their intentness upon her made her go over to the Donatello child. Her face illumined at this, her first sight of that work. Her hand rose involuntarily toward the soft round cheek. It fell on Kendry's card, preserved with its Paris date. "Oh!" she nodded, looking at him. "You hadn't shown me this before," she said to Mary.

"Jack's monument to our days in Italy," Mary said, with sweetness new to his ears. Her mother came and greeted the girl with a warmth that gladdened him.

"They are persuading you to keep on?" she said, pressing the girl's hands. Miss Marr's eyes widened for the older woman.

"Your daughter says it's the greatest thing in her life," she answered. "It wouldn't be so for me. It wouldn't—" she hesitated.

"It wouldn't be enough?" said the woman who had been beautiful to the girl who was. "You couldn't lend yourself to the illusion for a while, as a pleasant avenue into the broad world?" The girl's hands pressed hers fondly.

"I don't believe *you* could have," she confidently smiled. Their quiet was interrupted by the ponderous entrance of Henry Eastwood. Such social success as he enjoyed proceeded from the manner by which now he self-reliantly commended himself to Miss Marr. He rapped loudly upon the lintel above his head, and to their startled attention bowed from the waist, his hand upon his heart.

"On to the banquet hall!" he declaimed. "I've mixed a tidy little tide for every lady." There was anonounced a youth who stood at the threshold in diffidence rarely beheld there. Eastwood turned it into crimson blushes. "Little hungry Tommy Thornwick!" Eastwood roared, leading him forward to Miss Marr. "This is the handsomest lady sculpture in captivity!" he waved to her. "And this is little empty-tummy-Tommy!" The youth knocked over a chair in his retirement into an obscurity from which subsequently he was a face raptly drinking in Miss Marr.

At the table Kendry wondered if she had ever tasted, before dinner, a mixture of such strength as he detected in his glass.

"What have you put in this?" Mary asked, voicing his thought.

"Sure, now," Eastwood dinned at Miss Marr, in something of a brogue, "'twill do her no harm. 'Tis a tender little drink—' for a tender little maid, for a slender little maid!' " he chanted at her from a heavy chest. She contemplated him without a sense of his humor, sipping defensively at her glass. He seized a fork and hammered on a crystal bowl. "On with the feast, let food be unconfined!" His sister breathed a sigh for him.

"You melancholy drawing-room comedian," she said.

Kendry heard him continue to his silent audience. Mary took occasion to acknowledge the jade dragon. It was passed along the table and reached Miss Marr. She examined the attached card and stole a glance at the giver and at Mary.

"Curious," Mary caught her. "It makes your eyes green."

"I shouldn't wish to make your dragon blue," the girl smiled back. Eastwood had snatched up Kendry's card and was shaking with laughter.

"Pass the buck to Mab!" he commanded the butler. "It's Mab that gets the green eye now! He's written it: '*Ethel* Eastwood!'"

In the general amusement Kendry fixed on the smile of Mrs. Eastwood, which seemed to proceed from thoughts more than she might have cared to tell. He tried not to flush. "It's aphasia," was all he could say. Mrs. Eastwood's attention returned to

play upon the girl, watching the effect upon her of a surrounding so unusual, and the effect, shown in her mounting color, of the glass she had emptied. The youth across the table spoke in monosyllables, his eyes fluttering about the girl's features, about her dark eyebrows so contrasted with her hair, and haunting the corners of her mouth, wherein there registered in hardly distinguishable miniature the reaction of what she was so keenly seeing and hearing. Mary, Kendry felt, was being charming, was being exclusive and confidential to him. Her strain held to the reminiscent—to Europe and all their doings together. But, under his fixed look to her, in fear of seeming to wander, he did wander, toward Miss Marr, as perhaps she wandered once or twice toward him. How was the idea faring? Drudgery was about to swallow her. Eastwood's heavy onslaughts, Kendry believed, would have been enough to drive her from the house. Mary's remaining detached and observant Kendry was not yet ready to resent; he generously counted on Mary's eventually melting. But from this there arose a conflict of generousities, close to the portal of the idea. The idea, hovering about that unprotected youthful loveliness, so superior to its outward covering, so mild without, and capable, he knew, of such fire within, made the conversation—even Mary's present conversation—seem froth. Eastwood's pounding on the table rose above the voices.

"To any young woman with amber hair who can guess where I was this afternoon," he said pronouncedly, "I will give a jade dragon that will put that one off the stage." Eyes went to Miss Marr. It was not to be told how much her smile now owed to Eastwood's endeavors to please and how much to the glass he had concocted. There was a touch in her banter that somewhat reassured her sponsor.

"Up among the gallery gods," she guessed.

"Not in the gallery! In a box-factory," he chuckled. "The bally box-factory," he glared through a smile at her, "which does *not* yawn for you to-morrow morning. I own the land where that shack is built; I know the man. I looked inside and saw the other girls employed there. My dear child, that's impossible. I told him, on your behalf, that you didn't want the work. That you wouldn't come to-morrow. That there was something better waiting for you," he declared.

His mother pronounced his name. The girl's color mounted and fled.

"I think that was ill-advised," she said, with some loss of voice. "I shall go there to-morrow."

"He hired another girl instead, on the spot," said Eastwood calmly.

"Good Heavens, why can't you stick to your own affairs!" his sister burst. Her mother frowned. The youth stared with dropped jaw. Miss Marr mastered herself.

"I can't quite thank you for this," she said, more firmly. "You had no authority to speak for me."

"Telephone down now," said Kendry, trying to maintain a neutral voice, "rearrange it with the man."

"Too late," sang Eastwood comfortably. "Place is closed. I did this on behalf"—he rose, thrusting up his glass—"on behalf of a young lady who is destined for corridors as far removed from a box-factory as Heaven is removed from—hm—Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Of a young lady, who, by virtue of her physical charm, intellectual attainments, grace and linguistic accomplishments!"—he wandered back into his art of fascination—"is *facile* princess and *e pluri-bus unum*!"

"Your Latin and your taste shamble together," his sister cut at him.

"Order!" Eastwood pounded on the table with huge enjoyment.

"Can't you halter him?" Mary rose at her mother. Grace Eastwood took her understanding gaze from Ethel Marr.

"Let him hang himself," she directed.

"Order!" Eastwood cried. "*And*, ladies and gentlemen—and little Tommy Two-Eyes!"—he drew up his shoulders with mirth—"I most humbly and sincerely propose the health, the prosperity, and the—cyclonic, cometic, epoch-making social success—of Miss Ethel Marr—standing!"

They stood to this toast in a silence, Eastwood flourishing his glass to Miss Marr in a bid for her gracious forgiveness. Kendry found himself still on his feet.

"Henry, I don't approve of your course any more than I approve of the forces that cause a landslide. I don't think you had the least right to assume so much," he said to the older man, his clearer utterance contrasting. "But if the landslide shall have happened, I shall be bound to congratulate myself on the results. I don't want Miss Marr to lack confidence in her abilities; I don't want her to take that employment. And if she's forced a little along the line of her evident talent for modeling I believe that, while the day may never come when she'll forgive you, Henry, the day will come when she will forgive me for saying that I am glad you committed your indiscretion."

Grace Eastwood filled the gap in which her son swung between broad possibilities of speech and silence. "Well said," she nodded.

"Your guest gives you what you deserve, little boy," said Mary. "But it's for Miss Marr to respond to the toast. I know she's ready. I know she's self-possessed."

"You don't think she's come prepared for an ordeal like that!" Kendry demurred, without getting Mary's eye.

"Speech! Speech!" Eastwood called delightedly.

"Speech!" the youth dared echo, eager that the stage be swept for her. Ethel turned gratefully to Kendry. To their surprise she rose. Her color was high; her wine glass lingered in her fingers.

"I like to try at things that are hard for me to do," she began slowly. "I have never done anything like this before. Probably I never shall again. I belong to another world. Perhaps that pardons me for standing up just once in this pleasant light, for the experience of it. I shouldn't like to sit down without tying the moment to a sentiment, one that I can look back on without ever regretting. I'm fortunate to find it so near. It's one that transcends all ordinary sentiments. I'm here because I met Mr. Kendry. He does me the honor to think me worthy of the application of a great idea. He's not to be blamed if his heart is better than his judgment. He doesn't know"—she leaned forward for one catch at words—"that he's already accomplished for me all he ever can. But that's so much. He has made me acquainted with the idea. I believe in it. I, too, shall try to act on it, in my little narrow way. Always with the inspiration of having seen some one capable of conceiving it, of shaping his career to it. I shall see him pass on to broader fields, and I shall hear of his accomplishing something big, something with an element of immortality in a world where so many of us are flippant and striving for things that are momentary and vain. I don't think I should have stood up to say this, if it

hadn't been for that first wine—if it was wine?" she smiled. "But I should have felt it. Perhaps Mr. Eastwood thought that out of that glass the truth would come. If so, he was right. I should like you to drink to the idea; not in wine, if you please—it's too noble an idea to be drunk in wine—but in water; water which, if you give it freedom, always proceeds at once to greater refinement, which makes it the symbol for Mr. Kendry's idea."

The mother of Mary Eastwood bent over Ethel's chair and kissed her. He saw it through some warmth of his own lids. It was an act so spontaneous, so to be unexpected of Grace Eastwood, that it awed her children. He was to detect in it the stir of memories down beneath the disillusionments of a wifehood and of a maturer motherhood. The youth beside her remembered that he still was standing. The butler recovered from a motionless study of that young woman. The dinner went on as in the embers glowing. Henry Eastwood became low-voiced and subjective. There was a period during which Mary's attention wandered past Kendry to the girl who had not faced him again; a period in which Mary's intelligent agate eyes were without their amusement and condescension, but took on a respect that perhaps was tinged with something like apprehension. The true conversation ran on between the youth and the girl of his own age. The atmosphere had changed; all, not because a young woman, without stammering, had

spoken words that perhaps for days had been mutely framing, but because what she had said was the clear ringing of a bell unmuffled by fear or designing, when struck with a purpose by a world that could seek its little ends by devious means.

CHAPTER X

A WHIRL IN OBSCURITY

THEY were a perfunctory four who drove down the hill in a hired carriage. Each held to his own preoccupation, which was, in part, a searching as to what the preoccupation was of one of the others. Also Kendry was recalling a dialogue that had not been meant for his ears between Mrs. Eastwood and Miss Marr, in front of the Donatello child. Eastwood and Mary had left Kendry in the adjoining room, examining a picture.

"You don't see how it would lead on?" he heard Grace Eastwood coax. "I don't mean great works; that's Mary's illusion. I mean the life, the people, the interest, the possibilities."

"I couldn't," Ethel sighed to her. "I couldn't unless I knew that I must, and some day could, produce something as beautiful as this." There was a pause, as of a look.

"Some day you will," Grace Eastwood breathed to her. "Only, it will be more beautiful. It will cry and snuggle its head to you. Then you'll not envy any man in the world."

So strangely it sounds to youth from its elders when

for a flash they acknowledge the Prime Vocation. It awed Jack Kendry with a sense of his responsibility, infinitely broadening, for everything that should follow in the life of Ethel Marr from the departure he had caused in it. The thought sank down and lodged against the corked bottle wherein lay the recollection of Paulter.

They drove through the colors and savors of the quarter to where, for white clients, the stage door was the customary access to the Chinese theater. The slope of the hill brought this door to that lower level, half under ground, where the actors, the musicians and more than fifty other employés ate and slept in an extraordinary economy of space. It was a hive of cells, each the length, breadth, and height of one man, and each occupied by two. Those whom Eastwood encountered as he stooped to lead his single file stepped into low doorways to give passage. His sister followed, attentive on her skirts, her footing, her safety, her beleaguered senses. On these beat the odors of salted sea-food, of cooking vegetables and pork, of pungent Kwangtung tobacco and of opium. The close contact with the thick-lipped yellow faces, familiar to her in the open, kept her eyes averted. The costume in that atmosphere was a pair of slippers held on by upturned toes, and two thin cotton garments shrinking from the extremities. Dim lights made shadowy pictures through the smoke, of men who lounged or lay asleep or comatose in their bunks, to

the voices, the clatter of dishes, the dulled clangor of the orchestra overhead. It was not squalor, it was too much alive, too cannily, methodically efficient; under a scheme which squarely could treat men as mechanical appliances. It could go on forever, the machinery of an art, though the world should be without green grass or blue sky or the air of the sea. Kendry thought of the home of these quantities—the mountain. The Nymph of those happy slopes, her eyes glistening with novel curiosity and bafflement, her live nostrils compressed for the one protest she had to make, was in no haste to pursue Mary Eastwood. The girl's keen impressions rebounded to Kendry, with bright thanks for his conductorship. It could not but cause him to picture her ascending some Italian tower, garden scented, where straight cypresses shot across a skyline seen through the loopholes. Had he been Mary, he protested, this one sight of Ethel Marr's enjoyment at an escape from her impounded life would have made him bear her off to where her heart could sing to backgrounds of a measure with her beauty. He could not understand the attitude of Mary; eventually he should clearly say to her—but Miss Marr stopped on a winding stair where their heads must bow. The others had gone above and out of sight. She held her skirts about her, offering her free hand.

“Good-by!” she said, shining her gratitude. It was as if she were finishing her dinner speech. Her

trust in him, her acceptance of the fact of the Donatello, the dragon, obviously binding him to Mary Eastwood, was as clear as a moment's sparkle in a brook he might be crossing and leaving behind.

"It *shall* not be good-by!" he rose, with a blessed wholeness, tight upon her hand. The flash of it went a little deeper than her self-possession, startled her, made her glance with some new question that instantly melted in her smile. She went on ahead of him. If she had any hurt from Mary she might know that her sponsor was as firm as rock, Kendry defiantly registered. Bringing Mary to acknowledge the loveableness of Ethel Marr would be bringing Mary one step nearer to himself, he believed. He caught up the Eastwoods at the head of the stairway. Mary was collecting her petticoats, frowning at the din.

They were in a passage lined with brass-bound coffers where the players kept their costumes. It was Ethel's not waiting for Kendry that brought her into the lead with Eastwood. He drew aside a hanging; the ladies found themselves at once in the center of the light, the voices, the action on the stage, the orchestral din, before the dark-hatted hundreds filling the spectators' space from top to smoky bottom. Mary Eastwood hesitated. Miss Marr moved with all-absorbing gaze in which Eastwood was a minor point at the side, fixed for her destination. Kendry could not have analyzed his masculine satisfaction at her unconscious full subjectiveness to the scene. He

had not yet made the generalization that the women of his time and place combated subjectiveness and clung to reservations through their moments of highest emotion. But it added a thrill to his championship of her. The white spectators sat on wooden chairs at right and left of the stage, with the orchestra at the back, beside the single entrance to the stage. The girl was held fascinated by one whose stately walk, like that of some monarch fowl, whose gown and head-dress glittering with silk and gold and facets of silvered glass, proclaimed him a mighty personage of the drama. Mary smiled at her.

"Do you notice," she whispered, "her poise, her assurance, her making that 'entrance' like a veteran? Why have you not thought of the stage for her?"

She was not prepared for his shortness; it came from an undigested prejudice he had about theatrical life.

"Because I respect her," he said. He added nothing mollifying, though he felt Mary lean away from him in a muteness that was to continue. There was in all the clangor and stridency that divided their attention something not so easily dismissed as noise. It might have been the mere rapid striking on the ear of cymbal and gong, of stone drum and snakeskin drum, in terms of rhythm rather than of melody, against the soaring of the fiddle and the squeaking of the reed. But its effect, with here and there the suggesting of a melody hovering to be swallowed in

the din, was barbarously stimulating, bound to haunt the memory. It was as though the overpowering percussives crashing through the phlegmatic exterior of a race made a breach for that small singing of the strings with its burden of the inescapable yearning and melancholy.

The conventions of that stage, calling for so much to be imagined in scene and property did not prevent the packed hundreds swaying as one from the comic to the solemn. The ascending tiers of benches might have been drawn each with two dark brush-strokes for hats and bodies, with an intervening stroke of sallow for the faces, all through a blur ascending from inevitable black cigars. The single bit of color came from a corner in the gallery—the gilt ornaments in the oily hair of the women looking down on the stage, bald-foreheaded, robed in glossy black. No eye strayed upward to this corner and the women stayed intent upon the stage. In the front row, dressed like all the others, Kendry saw Chan Kow, if it was Chan Kow. The man's face, like a pumpkin in a row of gourds, answered Chan Kow's description of himself. The straight-brimmed soft hat was over his eyes; his long cigar added its clouds to the semi-obscurity. The scene of the play was on the bank of a river, represented by two chairs. A second gorgeous personage had tottered into the light, all convincing save for his height, simulating the difficult step of the small-foot woman. This falsetto lady

delivered lines which it was fortunate could not be understood by the *fan kwai* so decorously listening on the wooden chairs. If that was Chan Kow in front the lines put him in the most enjoyed of moods. The deft eloquence of the lady's fan was for Kendry one of a circle of impressions which revolved with increasing rapidity. There was his own glance at Mary, on whom the stridor, the smoke, the distasteful Oriental visage were working a restlessness. There was his noticing the long sleeve of the actor, extended out toward that doubtful identity filling wide space in the front row, illuminating an intimate style of address that struck the humor of the audience. Ethel Marr has ceased to follow the player's movement. Kendry laid her lessened color to the atmosphere; it called for proposing an early withdrawal from the place. The orchestra was mute but for the striking of a resonant stone, now coldly punctuating more tragic utterance. Kendry followed one quick glance of Ethel Marr to the other section of the white audience, across the stage. He saw the ears of Collins and beside Collins, with a mouth intently set, glaring at Ethel Marr, with his body strangely forward as if braced for action, he saw Paulter. The small-foot woman stopped her speech, pointing to the great round head in the front row. She spoke a word and waited. A stroke on the stone heightened the still expectancy. All the lights in the house went out together. There was a flash as from the actor's sleeve and the report of

a pistol. There were screams and cries in the dark and the overturning of chairs.

Kendry remembered the clutch of Mary upon his arm, his pushing back his chair, his attempts to lead her. So many voices were calling that he could not distinguish hers. He was knocked over in a rush of many feet across the stage. The pistol shots went on. He rose, groping for her. His hand grasped a skirt that was snatched away from him. He felt for the chairs. A torrent of the audience mounting the stage and stumbling over them carried him on the way to the regions below. He fought out of it, he could not tell in what direction, calling to Miss Marr. Another mass was overturning benches at the back of the auditorium, struggling for the exit to the street. Some one brought a light. The benches were empty. The belated of the black mob surged around the two ways of escape. The body of a man hung over the first of the benches. Kendry leapt down to him. In the gloom he could not distinguish the blood-stained features. The man with the faint wick floating in a saucer of nut oil looked down at Kendry without expression. The victim recognized the shadow of a *fan kwai*. He struggled to rise.

"Suey Lee—bad—bad man!" he choked, pointing where the actor had stood. He fell back as if lifeless. The lamp-bearer picked up the battered cymbals and tried to straighten them out. The theater became vacant and still.

In the narrow spaces below Kendry was thrust aside with many others while several policemen and night watchmen crowded past. When he reached the air the curious had begun to block the alley. The Eastwoods' carriage was nowhere to be seen. He hurried around to the main entrance. In the gathered crowd he could see no familiar face. He returned to the alley. There was no one. He started toward Telegraph Hill.

A block farther and he stopped. Why was he not going in the direction of Mary Eastwood's? It was because Henry, alone with the two, first would have proceeded to Miss Marr's and leaving her, would then go home with his sister. He should intercept Mary and her brother returning. This had been his unconscious cerebration, he told himself. If it was equally probable that Eastwood, making a trio to his own house, would return agreeably alone with Miss Marr on the longer distance to Telegraph Hill, Kendry found it now too late to hesitate. Yet he was not wholly of a mind with his steps; that was what caused him to lose time by not taking an electric car to the foot of the hill. As he hurried up those wooden cleats the recollection of Paulter added to the violence of his heart. He was convinced that it had not been a coincidence; in any case he was growing too weary of meeting Paulter's hostile glare and ignoring it. If it was Paulter who had knocked him over once more unawares the climax of the ridiculous had happened.

Paulter might appear at Miss Marr's door. Kendry hoped he would. He turned a gloomy corner and quickly stopped. It was Eastwood.

"You took her home?" Kendry panted.

"No," said Eastwood shortly. "Did you take her somewhere?"

"No," said Kendry. Eastwood coldly looked at him.

"Which one?" Eastwood suddenly asked.

"Which one?" Kendry echoed. He shook his head. "Either of them." Eastwood took in a breath.

"Then where's Mary?" he burst.

"I don't know," said Kendry. "You didn't see Miss——?"

"Did you expect to find Mary up here?" Eastwood rose. "Say, I want to know who that thug is who came to her door." He pointed toward the Marrs'. "Breaking his damned head is what I was born for."

"Not till I get a chance," said Kendry in a mood to let no one be more aggressive than himself. Eastwood's rage went up another notch.

"What the devil have *you* to do with it?" he said. "Where's my sister?" The younger man was silent and diminished, biting his lip.

"Come along to a telephone," he wheeled. They hurried down the hill without speaking. Too many conjectures were in Kendry's mind for him to catch the main obsession of Eastwood. Weight settled

more heavily on his heart. Reason receded. He could not name his trouble. It was of a nature that, when a drunken roysterer reeled against him, made him bowl the man into the gutter with the flat of his hand under the man's chin. Eastwood grunted ironically. They ran and hung on to the step of an electric car. Presently Eastwood turned to him:

"I don't need you to help me find her! Good night!" He dropped off and pushed open the swinging doors of a saloon, seeking a telephone. Kendry went on in a daze. He saw his hotel and jumped down and got to his room. He rang up the Eastwood house; the line was reported "busy." Then he found in the book the number of the Marrs'.

"Yes, and she's got *you* sized up!" came Paulter's voice. "She's cut out *your* wire! You just hang up!"

A card was brought him:

M. CLARENCE DE PRESLES

CERCLE INTERNATIONALE, VALPARAISO

Collins followed the bell-boy in.

"You are not De Presles!" Kendry glared at him.

"Eh?" said the man with the ears, comfortably. He opened his coat and showed a Secret-Service badge. "My name's Kelly," he said, with a quiet

smile. "Sorry I got on your nerves in the course of my business."

Kendry stared at him and stared at the card.

"Show the gentleman up," he commanded. Kelly closed the door after the bell-boy.

"Can I count on you to help the Government in this case?" he said. "We want to put Paulter behind the bars."

"You can!" Kendry exulted. "I'll go alone and get him in fifteen minutes if you'll give me the authority."

M. Clarence de Presles could not have waited patiently for an answer to his card. He entered almost immediately. He cast one glance at Kelly, who had hidden his badge.

"*Bon soir, mon cher Monsieur!*" Monsieur de Presles formally saluted Kendry, his silk hat in his hand. He was in faultless evening dress. His black hair fell from the center of his scalp and conventionally covered his crown. He had eyebrows. He had cut off his cue.

CHAPTER XI

TWO HOME-GOINGS

IN the uproar after the lights had gone out in the Chinese theater, Ethel Marr had turned toward the space in the dark where, a moment before, her eyes had met Kendry's. Her one round exclamation brought Eastwood's hand to her arm. He started to draw her toward the back of the stage, over the fallen chairs. They were caught in a rush of the frightened spectators who aimed to escape by the stage. The girl emerged breathless and alone. Some one else took a silent grip on her arm. She heard his lips close to her ear, speaking above the din, and her fear dropped to disappointment. She mutely surrendered to Paulter while he fought a way for her. Her mind went back to the others; the tragedy of the four pistol shots had swept past her preoccupation. For a moment she stood against a wall, loose-fingered, in the black darkness of a passage the crowd had not discovered. The appearance of Paulter was but a return, a little sooner than expected, of the cloud that must engulf her. Parting thus would save some insincerities with Mary Eastwood, and save the difficult endeavor, under Mary's increasingly watchful eyes, to seem as defi-

nitely bidding farewell to Mr. Kendry as she was. Paulter brought her to a cab on another side street. That was his extravagance, his bravado; it helped her to believe that he had taken supper with her mother, had heard Ethel's telephone message reciting her programme for the evening, and had spied upon her arrival at the theater with the Eastwoods. She entered the cab without protest. She knew what manner of talk would ensue. She could protect herself from his vehemence by a mildness that would vaguely hold forth to him a hope of her melting and would lead him on tiptoe lest he break the spell. It was degrading; only once of late, and then under the inspiration of her communion with Kendry, she had spoken her full thought to Paulter, willing to meet his violent rage. Now her apparent exhaustion made her seem to him helpless and docile while, under the cover of an occasional monosyllable, her thoughts dwelt on the three whom she pictured driving in their carriage up into their other world. So she drove toward the foot of her barren hill, a little more than alone on account of the presence of Arthur Paulter.

Those shots, ringing into the blankness of Mary Eastwood's ennui in a surrounding so barbarous and odorous, had brought her sharp cries above the shouts of the men. She had clutched at her brother and felt him move away from her. Her voice, sharply appealing to him in the darkness, was lost in the increased clamor, the trampling, the falling of chairs. Some

bony hand had seized her wrist. The man reeked of the place. He tried to make her understand him. She fought him off and was tossed against a wall, along which she groped till the man once more laid hold of her. While she scolded him he pushed her into a passage and through doors, past dim lights in narrow spaces. Then she fled before him into the welcome air of the alley whence they had entered the theater. The carriage there was not hers; the alley was jammed with alien faces. Instinctively she pushed her way to the one man in European clothes. He pushed to meet her and under a raised silk hat asked her in French if she spoke his language. His graciousness, his powerful frame, brought her the breath of relief. She volubly explained her plight while he stood uncovered, voicing his sympathy. His was a great, round keen-eyed face—from the south of France, Mary at first fixed him. Her impatience rose at Jack Kendry; that he should live in a part of the world she called the ragged edge of civilization, and that he should bring her to its most sodden quarter. Monsieur, so deferentially opening his carriage door to her, carried the atmosphere of another society.

“If Madame will join my sister-in-law?” he said, “we will leave this *canaille*. Then I will return to Madame with the gentlemen.”

In the dim interior Monsieur’s companion drew aside her skirts and smiled a welcome. It was like a plunge

into the old world's safety, Mary volubly declared, leaning her disheveled head against the cushions. She was too much taken up with her sensations and emotions to examine the other woman; she was too growingly disdainful of a pair of men so wanting at a crisis, the one in love with and the other in quixotic apposition with a piece of fresh but unstamped beauty. What a relief to be out of that gaping, fulsome crowd, she went on to Monsieur. *Cochons de Chinois*, Monsieur responded, in full sympathy. It was a long way from Paris, if Madame would pardon him. The sentiment was met by a deep acquiescence from Mary while she sought to restore her head-dress. The carriage ceased to rock from the unevenness of the cobblestones; the red reflection of a street lamp shining on a wall covered with advertisements in Chinese shone in on Mary's long endeavors. Monsieur alighted.

He would return with the others; there were three, if he recalled. She caught his profile, his heavy lips, his blunt nose, the straight black hair plastered over the top of his head. He was some mixture of blood from a French province, she guessed—Tahiti, for choice; but a gentleman; that half portion of Norman blood did what endless wealth could not do in the provincial West. To the woman at her side Mary poured forth her vexation at being left alone, her contempt for her brother's infatuation for a pliant young thing, all through the medium of a glorification of

France, whose language, she said, was the only one in which she wholly could express herself—until it occurred to her to hear the other woman's tongue.

"He's gone after the other three," that lady irrelevantly spoke in American. There was no foreign accent in that coarse voice—a case of education in some western minor school for girls, Mary reasoned. "He'll sure come back," the voice found it advisable to protest. A *belle-sœur* of a poorer strain, Mary observed, a common accident in the dependencies, where women are less numerous. At the best she would have been inferior to Monsieur; it was only in America that the women were superior to their men, she reflected. An odor of violet perfume strongly filled the carriage, she found time to suffer. She leaned back and kept her nostrils closed. In the silence she glanced at the cheek of her companion and detected rouge. Monsieur came back alone.

"One of the two gentlemen left the theater and went north, with a young lady who had copper-colored hair. The other gentleman has just gone in the same direction, alone," said Monsieur. Mary caught her breath.

"They both?" she shut her teeth. "I came in a carriage; but I shall return in a street car—going west," she shrugged.

"Impossible, Madame!" said Monsieur, pained at the thought. "We shall do ourselves the honor of driving Madame to her door. Madame's husband

would rightly think ill of us, if we did not beg the privilege."

The cutting quality of her thanks was not intended for Monsieur. She made haste to show him that. Monsieur responded with sympathy. He would have followed the second gentleman if he had but identified him in the theater; but he had had to take the word of a bystander. His own glance from the entrance on the stage, where he had arrived just the moment before the lights went out, had been absorbed entirely by the two ladies of Madame's party, two contrasting types of unusual beauty, Monsieur begged to name them, notable even in a land of charming contrasts. He had been startled by the younger lady, with the copper hair, the dark eyebrows, because certainly she was one whom he had come to San Francisco to see. She was, unless Madame should correct him, the daughter of a sea captain he once had known in Tahiti—a handsome, blue-eyed man, fit for the straight-out battles with wind and water rather than for the feverish stratagems of land.

Monsieur was, then, from Tahiti? Mary turned his question. Monsieur reflected; Madame had visited Tahiti? No? It was his birthplace; he spent a few months there each year, compelled by his affairs. His losing these moments on his way to the Continent was due to his search for the young lady with the copper hair. There was coming to her a small legacy, or more strictly, a debt long owed her father and now

collected. Perhaps Madame could tell him more about the young woman, for the fatherly interest he felt in the orphan of his friend. Mary regretted that she was unable to. The young woman had served her for a short time as a model—ah, Madame was an artist—it explained her fine intellectual head. The young woman, Mary said, had served her solely in a professional way; she was doubtless a worthy person, of whose private circle Mary knew nothing.

It would have proved an amusing one, Monsieur could well think, since it appeared to consist of one young man, who was in love with her—a young man of one of the best families. It had been Monsieur's thought that Madame could identify that young man—reported of a fine skin, a strong-cut jaw, a thoughtful eye; given to theories about benefiting the world, Monsieur had vaguely heard—fantastic theories involving a strange state of conscience which referred its acts to some ultimate conception of the universe. The dramatic complication, said Monsieur, was that the young man had engaged himself to a woman half a dozen years his senior, prior to meeting his younger affinity. Madame perhaps would know the older lady, who also followed the arts—a sculptress.

It was amusing. Mary cut the air; but she must explain to Monsieur that San Francisco was her Tahiti; social affairs did not bring her here. She saw little of the people; their concerns did not entertain her.

The older lady, Monsieur held somewhat obtusely to his theme, as if he had a fixed amount to say—was estimable, of a distinguished family. She was, of course, in ignorance of the true leaning of the young man's affections, otherwise her pride doubtless would resolve quickly the situation, with that independence and decision, Monsieur remarked, so to be admired in American women. They would have their husbands come to them without reservation, or they would remain spinsters, which, owing to their rare charm, grace, fascination, Monsieur reveled, they rarely did remain.

The situation was indeed one of dramatic possibilities, Mary dryly told him. And the younger lady—her sentiments?

Monsieur threw open his hands. When one is young, when Prince Charming is cultivated, dreamy, handsome, full of undeveloped forces—and when a girl suffers from a poverty, an isolation, yet knowing the power her beauty could yield in more congruous environment—ah, the answer was not difficult! There was, of course, opposition on the part of a mother, who—but pardon Monsieur for babbling on as to a matter of more interest to his own fatherly heart than it possibly could be to a woman of the great world, such as Madame. They rattled across close to a cable car clanging its insistent gong; the headlight shone for a moment through the carriage windows. Monsieur's sister-in-law might have been taken off

the streets of San Francisco, Mary covertly shrugged. A curious place, this San Francisco, Monsieur affably went on; remarkably favored by the hand of God and rather badly disfigured here and there by the hand of man. The Park, yes—and also the mountain across the Gate, the zig-zag railroad journey to the summit, the sublime view of the sea and the distant Sierra. There one could, for a moment, forget the adjacent works of man. Yet for him—yes, Paris—to die in.

Undoubtedly, Mary less effusively said. She hoped never to have to return here. Life was too short, unless one had the hardened susceptibilities of a pioneer. Monsieur agreed. He should, perhaps, have the honor of receiving a bow from her, some day, carriage to carriage, in the Bois.

But he declined her offer of refreshment. He rang Mary's bell. They parted in the grand manner, his corpulence surrendering to his correctness of costume and of pose. A little whiff of *vieux Europe*, despite the *belle-sœur*, Mary sighed, as she climbed the dark stairs.

She did not summon her maid. She stood before her long mirror, examining her extraordinary dishevelment. She gave an added pull of confusion to her hair, threw back her hat a little, smiled with an appropriate abandonment. Men liked that, she shrugged, tossing her hat to a chair. All the room was speckless, chastely blue, shining with straight-

laid silver tools of the toilet. She began to undress, disciplining the escaped locks, standing erect and spare before the mirror, which reflected her fixed comment of scorn on the ancient art of allurements. Doubtless she was reputed ignorant of its simple procedures. At thirty-one her label was probably "cultured," or sometimes "intellectual." She looked younger than she was, she believed, pausing close at the glass. If so, it was because she had never given herself anxiety about any man. But suppose, my dear sir, she should choose to be labeled, for your foolish capering.

The thought sent her hunting in a great drawer. She went far down before she left the blacks, the whites, the neutral colors, that marked the years of her set taste. She emerged with a folly in crimson silk, trimmed with green and gold and with crystal buttons. Her waist had not varied since this folly had begun to sink toward the bottom of the drawer. Meanwhile the fashion had returned, as nearly as any man would discern. She put on the skirt. Then she unbraided her hair and began an experiment which was not to her satisfaction. She stopped and hunted in an album. It was late, but she would sleep late. She found the photograph that showed the soft fall of the hair over a temple, rounding her face above this same crimson affair—it all came back through the ten years. She smiled engagingly to the face in the glass; she curled her narrow lips and widened her eyes, disclosing to you, for an instant so short as to

be tinged with uncertainty, that there is more in this world than a maiden may let escape to any one—except for one delectable moment to yourself. Thus she went to work to reproduce that coiffure to her satisfaction. There was the least bit less hair than in the photograph; but, behind the eyes, there was a new mordancy of comprehension.

CHAPTER XII

A CHOICE OF ALLIES

MONSIEUR, arriving at Kendry's rooms and greeting him in a manner and in an appearance so transformed from that of the shambling Chinese coolie with the jade dragon, smiled as if his other guises had been the false ones. Kelly, who buttoned from view his badge of a Secret Service Agent, must recognize Chan Kow, Kendry thought. It was improbable that a man ferreting in Chinatown had failed to take note of a figure so commanding and evidently so notorious as Chan Kow. But Kendry saw no sign of recognition in Kelly; nor could he detect in Chan Kow, who seemed to know every one whose interests might touch upon his own, more than a polite glance at Kelly.

"I am *de trop, messieurs*," Chan Kow hastened in French. "I interrupt something of importance." Kendry saw Kelly look to him for the translation of the foreign tongue. Kendry, in his anger at the way successive events had tossed him lightly aside, kept his will at the tip of his tongue. There had been significance in all of Chan Kow's visits; now, with aroused suspicions, Kendry decided that the significance of this one should not escape him. Chan Kow had maintained

an obscurity as to his motives; with him, Kendry more irritatedly felt, friendship carried no clear candor, as with a white man. Now he came with a borrowed name and a false exterior, assuming that Kendry would lend himself to a dissimulation that was half shameful, half ludicrous.

"If I could have a few minutes with this gentleman!" Kendry suggested to Kelly. The little man of the great ears departed with a wave of his hand; he would wait in the lobby. Kendry opened his side-board, preparing to fortify Chan Kow's good humor.

"Your friend who has just left—Monsieur the Bat—you know who he is?" the old man settled himself.

"I do," Kendry had satisfaction in saying.

"Therefore avoid him," Chan Kow nodded. "He knows who I am but"—Chan Kow opened his palms—"it is no matter. He is not considerable. Merely ignore him."

"It is you that I am uncertain about," Kendry firmly eyed him. "If there's anything in my inherited friendship with you—and once or twice I've been as confidential with you as if you were my own father—then it's time for you to 'loosen up!' I don't like the way you have treated the matter of Mr. Paulter. I don't feel that you are playing open with me, sir. Why did you inveigle me into that theater, with ladies, to see that brutal murder? From what I know of Chinatown, I believe you knew that that murder was to happen. Now, tell me your motives!"

Chan Kow beamed across the rim of his glass. He blew a great cloud of smoke at the ceiling.

"My dear young man," he said, "one's motives are always mixed; otherwise honesty would be the part of common men instead of requiring genius for its perfection. The only time I can remember having acted with one single purpose was when the Viceroy of Shang-Tung sent a man after me with a sharp spear. I was not then so corpulent; but the man with the spear was an excellent runner, and unfortunately he caught up with me. When you come to see me I will show you the head of his spear. I was not then a collector of curious mementos of a checkered life, or perhaps I should have kept a little piece of the man, too."

"First evasion of my question," Kendry said. "Nothing to do with the case." Chan Kow blandly raised his glass to his host.

"To-night," he said, "one of my objects was a natural one. It was that you should witness my departure from this life." Kendry puzzled. "I mean the man who was shot. It was I."

Kendry stared at his sleek face; it was clean shaven, save for a day's growth begun on the upper lip. "You want to make people think?" Chan Kow nodded.

"*C'était moi*," he pleurably sighed, his head thrown back. "To-morrow you will see my obituary in the newspapers; not very complimentary to a poor foreigner. But I shall have the rest done properly. My funeral will cost four thousand dollars—very

beautiful burial robes. I shall have them dug up some night; two bands of music, three wagon-loads of food, sixty carriages to the cemetery, a hundred hired mourners. I shall regret not to be a spectator. *C'était moi!*"

"You connived at the death of this poor devil, so that people would think it was you who were shot?" Kendry rose.

"He and I connived it together, amicably," Chan Kow nodded. He drummed on the arm of his chair with fatherly amusement at the young man's revulsion. The act was an affectation of the occidental restlessness of body. "Sit down," he laughed. "You assist at the birth of the first Celestial man-of-the-world, *mon Dieu!* I emerge from the chrysalis—'Chan Kow'; Chinatown buries my old raiment of silk and gold, and I become a black butterfly in broad-cloth—a Parisian. *Je boulevarderai toute ma vie!* And I am happy! When one is happy one does not evade the questions of a friend; one talks, rather, with as little reservation as may be. But there is always some reservation. For example," he held up a little finger from which the growth of years had been sacrificed, "you would not choose to tell me in what direction you went after you left the Chinese Theater to-night?"

"Toward Telegraph Hill," said Kendry promptly. He was willing to give pattern to Chan Kow, even at some cost.

"*À la bonne heure!*" the old man bowed. "And I will not ask you why; because you do not know."

"Which again has nothing to do with the case—not even with the trifle of your implication in a murder," Kendry grimly said. "If you want to be a complete Caucasian you must not only be more direct, but you must stop holding your cigar between your thumb and forefinger with your palm up."

"*Diable!*" Chan Kow made haste to change his mode. "I have not switched you off the track," he said; "the train merely has stopped. As to my conniving at this death to-night, that was purely an affair between the corpse and myself. It was an arrangement something like that between God and man, though more satisfactory than one is able to make with the Creator. The man was to die without warning, at my will; but observe, he was, meanwhile, to enjoy both freedom from want and protection from his enemies. Oh, yes," the old man nodded, "he leaves a good little wife and two sons—that was included. His soul will travel as in a Pullman car."

"A man made such an agreement with you, and not under compunction?" Kendry accepted the discussion, in spite of himself.

"No. But the generosity was mine, not his. Many years ago I awoke and found him tightening a cord around my neck. I kept him three days in my room, most of the time suspended by the chin, his big toes brushing the floor. He grew confidential.

It was because we looked so much alike that he had wanted to kill me. He said that every man was entitled to a face of his own; that the mistake made in heaven, of giving us both the same face, must be rectified upon earth or it would cause endless trouble in hell. We are, you see, quite human in China. You yourself would not mourn at the bier of a man who was your counterpart. *Bien*, we compromised; we made use of each other. It was just, though the beggar had no intellect, which to a capable eye made every difference in our physiognomies. But I always felt that some day I should need to bury a personality from which I had extracted its highest possibilities. *Voici!* I drift away in the smoke of a pistol."

"To Paris—permanently?" said Kendry. He wondered what questionable issues lay behind this strange departure.

Chan Kow raised his penciled eyebrows.

"France some day," he said. "There is no haste. I shall come across you at the opera. You will have a beautiful young wife on your arm—what a joy to be the first to show her all these grandeurs! We shall compare the music with that pig-sticking cacophony of to-night. We shall smile and rejoice; and we shall understand why you turned north this evening." Kendry answered him dryly.

"And now I fully understand that you decline to meet my doubts as to your sincerity," he said. "You

keep off the points like a sword dancer." There was good-natured deprecation in Chan Kow's tapping on his glass.

"The 'points'?" he echoed. He looked about at the doors, then lowered his voice. "Before I died this evening I am reported to have cried out: 'Suey Lee—bad man!' I fancy I betray no one when I say that obviously Suey Lee was the female impersonator—the man who fired the shot in the darkness. One has many friends," he finished solemnly, "one wishes to allow each his own notion of morality, and to betray no one." Kendry was not impressed.

"Neither the police nor any one else will ever produce a murderer in Chinatown. Still, if you betray no one, why betray the man who——"

"Who thought he was shooting me?" the old man smiled. "That was not the act of a friend."

"Very well!" Kendry slapped the table. "What good does the whole foul business do *me*?"

"The same question I asked you long ago!" the old man leaned forward with kindly eyes. "To rouse the jealousy of a Paulter whom you do not hate, to rouse the interest of wonderful blue eyes you do not love—to what good? You merely have caused her to keep thinking: 'I am beautiful, and I have no lady's maid, no Paris gown!'"

"My dear sir, Miss Marr can triumph without them," Kendry announced.

"O, yes?" said Chan Kow. "Let her come into a

little money, where shall you find her? I will find her for you at a dressmaker's or a milliner's, planning to mitigate the wrong that was put on her when the devil invented clothes. Ah, my boy," Chan Kow rose to go, "if a man could be at once young and wise, life would not be worth living. But the Fates are kind; I have seen the lady sparrow dangle the wrong suitor by the top-knot, from a bough. When you have suffered that once, flit elsewhere—take it from an old man's heart." Kendry grimly smiled.

"I think I shall not take any of your advice," he said. "If I haven't discovered it sooner, it's my fault; you're a cuttle-fish!" Chan Kow slapped his gloves on the brim of his hat.

"The world is not so simple as a proposition in geometry," he said, with dignity. "A cuttle-fish may darken the waters to protect a friend. Come to me to-morrow evening." He offered his hand; it was as if he had spent many hours watching the French drama. "Meanwhile, reflect—reflect! And," he waved his hat, "remember that a bat is a rat with wings!"

This, Kendry decided, was the message so casually tossed off at parting, that had informed Chan Kow's visit. He did not wish Kendry to join with the Secret Service Agent in pursuing the counterfeiters. But he was not to have his way, Kendry rejoiced. Kelly, returning, appeared to hunt for some flavor of the interview he had missed.

"You've changed your mind?" he said.

"I'm ready to go at once," said Kendry. The man with the ears glanced at him furtively.

"How much do you know about Paulter?" he said, after a pause.

"From a criminal prosecutor's point of view? Nothing," Kendry said. "I have only my suspicions." Kelly's ruminative pauses began to irritate him.

"Needn't be afraid to tell me," Kelly said.

"I'm not afraid to tell any one!" Kendry brought him up. "I think he's a crook. He has threatened to shoot me. He's a moral bankrupt and ought to be in the hands of a receiver. What do *you* know?" Kelly's small eyes kept reverting to Kendry from under shaggy brows.

"What steps were you going to take to-morrow?" he said.

"Come, let's be on or off with it!" Kendry wheeled in his chair. "You've answered my question with another!"

Something caused Kelly to become acquiescent. His rubbing one ear as if to urge it less obtrusively back might have partaken of nervousness.

"Well, I'm shy of legal proof, myself, to date," he laughed. "What worries me is the police," he admitted, not without watching Kendry's expression. "You know how rotten they are."

"I couldn't prove it," said Kendry. "I only know

how rotten they are said to be by people who themselves are a trifle decayed."

"Well, they'll stand in with Paulter against you and me," Kelly pronounced. "Have you piped him off to the police, yet? All right, then. The Federal government wants to pull this thing off before the police get wind of it and warn him; and it would like to have witnesses of too much standing for the police to browbeat when it comes to an arrest. And I want to put this thing through without any Federal help, to score for myself, with my chief. There's all my cards, Mr. Kendry, and you can throw me down if you've a mind to. I'm at your mercy," he laughed. "If you even mention my name to the police, the whole business is spoiled."

He went away seeming grateful for Kendry's promise of secrecy. Eastwood, under the same ban, was to be secured if possible to make one of the party which was to carry out its raid on the following evening, at a time to be arranged by telephone. Kendry was to be allowed to enter first that underground stronghold where Kelly gave him to understand they should find those machines and other evidences of illicit coining that would complete the chain to be fastened on Paulter. It was not a wholly agreeable business, and Kelly was a man for whom Kendry could find no sympathy. But it met Kendry's view as to the right policy of a citizen in a republic; to be ever at service for the active enforcement of the law.

It seemed to promise a clearing of the way for the idea. With Paulter in the toils the house on the hill would present to Kendry the one hostility of Mrs. Marr. This he believed he could rapidly dissolve. He telephoned to Eastwood. The prospect of an encounter with the man who had turned Eastwood away from Miss Marr's, put him at once in excellent humor when it was coupled with Kendry's solicitous inquiry for Mary. She had said from behind a closed door that she was retiring in excellent spirits; which, if it probably contained irony, satisfied Kendry that she was unharmed.

He sat with compressed lips, revolving the situation in the silence of two o'clock in the morning. There was now a chance for action unimpeded by the questions of a lively conscience. Doubtless he had already missed other chances for action, and action was what counted. He had a growing faculty for seeing himself as the world might see him. Up to the present, on the stage where his own romance was being enacted, he felt about himself as the world, witnessing the spectacle, would have felt. The world would subscribe to his sentiments, his theories, his hopes; but its admiration, thinly disguised, would have gone to the other figures who crowded him; Paulter, carrying out his plans by brute force and instinct; Chan Kow, steadily molding events with a practiced if unscrupulous hand. If Kendry had ranted and begun to strut a little in his interviews with the Chinese and with

Kelly, it was because he wished to enforce himself as the hero of his own romance. He himself was becoming impatient at the inaction, the long speeches, of himself, the ingenuous, if right-minded, lover. As the curtain rolled down on the act he felt that he had spoken some lines more suggestive of the crisp action he could foresee for himself, in a drama where the idea must and should triumph through his own endeavors.

CHAPTER XIII

TWO KINDS OF WEATHER

HE went to Mary's prepared with an especial quality of indulgence for her. She would have suffered a nervous shock, she would be fatigued, she would be difficult. There would be some color laid on the previous night's adventure by her brother, a jealous explanation of Kendry's seeking Telegraph Hill, which must be removed. Miss Marr was linked with the idea; Mary was linked with his heart. Kendry's mild statement should recall the facts to Mary. She would be ironical, lightly disdainful, ungraciously aloof. There his patient indulgence would meet her—gentleness at which she could charge and bring up softly. If he came laden with so much sweetness it was perhaps natural that he himself should nibble some of it. He might have made faster headway with Mary Eastwood had he chosen to disburden himself of everything she did not intensely applaud—notably of the idea. It would have lightened his character, though; and for that he described himself as too austere virtuous; on which phrase he chewed, dangerously out of his habit of modesty, while for a little proof of eagerness he waited for Mary at the foot of the stairs.

A radiant, directly gazing creature tripped down to him in crimson silk, with her hair coquettishly over a temple. No less startling was the full pressure of her fingers.

"Magnificent!" He stood off.

"I've turned over a new leaf, you think?" she laughed. "Don't let me talk of myself when you look so pale." She stopped. "I think a cup of coffee—in that big chair, with your feet at the greatest allowable angle!" she made fine inspiration. He was not aware of looking pale; but he did not protest. She led the way; she had never before glanced back at him over her shoulder, leading thus. It did not increase his alleged pallor. "I must know at once how you got home last night," he said. "You'll have thought me——"

"Oh, I came in a carriage," she airily interrupted, as if there was more to say.

"Alone?" She raised her brows.

"If you were with me I didn't discover it. I was amused though. You didn't hear how I got away?"

"Nothing. I went in the direction I supposed Henry would take you. Chance was miserably against me!"

"Wasn't it, last night?" Mary sang, he thought, comfortingly.

"Then you quite understand?" He willingly avoided details.

"Thoroughly!" she held it up, her eyes straight at

him. She lighted the lamp under the coffee machine. He took a careful breath. Her mood was precious.

"Your work," he safely chose, "you are keeping at it steadily?"

"Jack, I'm pondering whether to chuck it!" she came out. His expression showed her no regret. "I don't think," she mused, "I'm not *sure* that it's enough to fill my life."

"I have never thought it was," he murmured.

"I couldn't keep on very long," she seemed to think aloud, the coffee measure poised in the hand that had so pressed his, "without confronting the question whether I ever could accomplish anything worth while—anything equal to that." She pointed at the Donatello boy, and her glance went for an instant to Kendry. Her fingers were more bejewelled than he had seen them before. "I should have to decide whether—whether," she toyed, "a woman can be a sculptor and—a woman, too!" The yielding quality of her sigh intoxicated him.

"Surely, for *you*, the womanly powers are so great that they must fix the choice," he softly went at her. Mary raised her eyelids wide, then drooped them, watching the alcohol flame. The movement strangely carried him for an instant back to an afternoon on a mountain side. "You'd come to find the woman's natural resources filling your life to the brim," he declared.

"Ah, but a man always imagines them hitched to

some masculine 'idea!'" Mary archly addressed the rug.

"No; hitched to the man who has the idea," Kendry said. "If you gave yourself to it graciously, just for experiment, you might come to think better of my idea. You think I've grown dull and lost some of my sense of the humorous; but with half a chance, I'll prove the worth of my idea to you."

Surely a fine candor rose with her eyes from regarding their reflection in the coffee machine. "You are flattering to take me so much into your confidence," she said. "Of course I can't help feeling, from my detached point of view, that your idea has been leading you into places where, for *me*," she seemed to recede from him, "it would be unpleasant to go. That theater, that murder, that Mr. Paulter—the whole unpleasant mixing with people one couldn't bear to have claim one's acquaintance. Though one may hope, now that your adventure with Miss Marr is quite finished," she said without a flutter, "you'll rise to higher planes."

It seemed unwise at that moment to suggest that his efforts in Miss Marr's behalf were not ended.

"I should be the last to protest against your delicate sense of proportion," Kendry said, "though of course you'd always join me in distinguishing Miss Marr from her present surroundings." Her mouth set a little queerly. "One could hardly avoid higher planes who so persistently pursued your own footsteps

as I do," he hastened. "You hadn't thought of that!"

"I hadn't taken it so for granted," she said, over her shoulder. Her thin mouth still was set. She held his cup under the faucet.

"When it has become so evidently my habit?" Kendry leaned to her, with lowered voice. "When it's the set of my jaw, for all time? You are overpouring my cup!" She compressed a smile, her back to him.

"You are enough to make one overpour," she said, with what he thought a tremor. The quick spread of her color brought him to his feet at her side.

"Do overpour, for once," he said. He put down the cup she thrust at him as if defensively. "Be sweet and human. Give me your hand, to keep, Mary."

She snatched the hand away from him. She was on the other side of the room before he realized her mood.

"Won't you?" he persisted, with foolish helplessness. There was a glitter in the eyes above her tight lips.

"You make me ill—most ill!" she delivered. Her short laugh echoed through the rooms. Her cheek was cool again. She stood fixed on the coffee machine, as if waiting for him to let her return to it. He hung suspended in the vacuum of rejection.

Her thrust had gone through his fine indulgence and had sunk coldly into his pride. He was sickened

by an anger he could not justify. At best he could not but let his deadened silence speak for him.

"Your coffee is getting chilled," she had to say, without tone. Kendry looked to the door.

"A donkey doesn't drink coffee," he said. "It's rude of me, after you've taken so much trouble; but I think I had better be kicking my heels in some wider space. You really must forgive me."

"I merely thought you were looking tired," she said. "If you insist that a walk will do you more good——"

He heard himself uttering commonplaces. She went to the door with him and waited while he descended the steps and gave his sickly smile of adieu.

"You didn't tell me how you came out with Miss Marr last night," she said, to his raised hat.

"You thought I went home with her?" Kendry stopped. Mary's eyes enlarged.

"Oh—you didn't?" she said. He shook his head. She seemed about to say something. "Oh!" she repeated.

The crimson silk sat trimly on her straight figure. The lock that had softened her temple had fallen into a flatter line.

While he walked aimlessly down the hill the wound kept pulsing, living over the scene. He had been "dangled by the top-knot" in Chan Kow's hideous phrase. He groped for moral footing. It was his dignity that had been affronted, he decided; and the

fault had been in his own want of restraint. There was this and that which he might have said, with humbling effect on her ; but never mind—what was he to do? It came back to the question whether Mary Eastwood really did love him. He concluded that she was on the verge of doing so. So to conclude was the symptom of his taste.

Very well, he would not go to her house again before he had some word from her. He began to calculate how long it would be before she would write. Then he began to be distressed at the thought that, of course, she might never suffer herself to write. He forgot to continue to look upon himself as a donkey. He was young ; he began to pity himself a trifle and to revolve plans. Even if she did not write it would not be absolute proof that she did not, or at some time had not, loved him. For a man truly in love there is no such proof.

He had turned into a street that inclined moderately from the skyline to the region of the better shops. From one of these Ethel Marr issued. It was the same straw hat, the same blue serge, the same smooth carriage. Had she taken employment at a ladies' tailor's? She was inspecting the display of a jeweler when he caught her up. There were some costly rings in the window. He remembered that he had seen no rings on her fingers ; now he saw no sign of one beneath her gloves. The same flush saluted him in the interval while her lashes rose before she spoke. He likened

her, in that agreeable little period for inspection, to a clear lake, perhaps rock-bound, but without one hidden reef, where cool spring and warm soft sunshine always were. Howsoever clumsily his heart might seek a chord with Mary's, his mind, he told himself, made no error in appraising Ethel Marr.

"You reached home safely with Miss Eastwood?" she said. At his reply she marveled. "She telephoned; she asked how I got home. She didn't speak of having missed you! You telephoned, too. I was weak; I wanted to escape a scene; so I didn't ring you up to correct what Mr. Paulter said. I relied on your knowledge of him."

"And on my understanding of you, I hope," Kendry said. "I have a restful faith in your evenness of temper. I suppose it's a quality of your perfect health. My father used to say that health was the first virtue in a living being." They were returning on her steps, past the ladies' tailor. "Shall I guess that you are going to take employment here?" he said.

"Better," the girl smiled. "They are to make me some new clothes. I have received some unexpected money—an old debt to my father, they tell me. Then, the stolen bonds have come back, in an express package, with nothing to show from where. It happened but this morning." She glanced for his comment on her haste to the tailor's. "The writing on the package is like the writing in the letter with the money,

and neither had a signature. The check was certified on a Hong Kong bank. The paper smelt of sandalwood. It's mysterious."

Kendry thought of Chan Kow; but he was more occupied with his satisfaction at seeing her saved from drudgery. He bowed to some ladies whose curiosity could not place Miss Marr. When his eyes were not enjoying herself she stole contemplative glances at him.

"And then what's the next step toward fortifying your peace?" he mused. "I shall dwell on that. How about a change of scene? How about some choice employment that will strengthen your independence?"

"Of my mother, and of Mr. Paulter?" she was skeptical.

"A background to fly to if the baleful quantities force you to the limit. That must be the prime consideration! I know what a girl must have, for that; first——"

"Clothes!" she laughed. She was gayer than he had seen her. It was a breeze over the surface of the lake, stirring it to greater life, but making the depths less visible.

"And courage. You'll have both, now. But next, you must have women friends—enthusiastic ones—supporting ones. Heavens, I wish my sister were here! I wish you, too, were my sister!" he still more spontaneously uttered.

"That's a flattery I can accept," the girl voiced. "It's ingenuous of you!"

He frowned with eagerness, inadvertently quickening his step.

"We must invent something to put you in your right setting," he pronounced. "You must generously recognize how useless, how footling I shall feel myself if you don't let my fat horses hitch on to pull your chariot out of the slough. I'm aware of the difficulties, the conventions—all that. I'll give 'em all their due, I'll be as docile as an ox. But the inspiration is too fine; if there's no other way out we must build one in defiance. We must talk this over a great deal," he turned to her. If there was any amendment she would have wished to make to this it was held behind the friendly tolerance of her eyes.

"I fear we shall not have time," she said. She stopped at a curb. "That's my homeward car." She shook her head at what she saw him about to propose. It brought up again the spectre of Paulter. The car relentlessly approached.

"You are frequently on the mountain?" he hastily sought.

"Occasionally," she nodded, without according it relevance.

"You'll be looking off from that same spot where the red and green stones are, at that same hour, three days from now!" Kendry mightily willed her. Her hand was on the rail. "Isn't it so?" Her eyes

widened; the mouth drew up a little, but without acquiescence. The passengers gave her the interested inspection she was accustomed to.

"I bade you good-by last night," she said. She swung on, in answer to the impatient jerk of the bell. He was deaf to the diversion.

"Think it over till you get to the top of the hill and then nod 'yes' to me!" Kendry prayed.

Her car rattled across the intersecting rails and he watched it up the steep incline. From the top she saw him lift his hat again. She bowed. There was a small flourish of the hat before it returned to his head. He resumed his way with a lighter step.

He was scornful, entering his club. It was a place to dine and to talk trivially with old bachelors. The mountain, with Miss Marr, was a place to recuperate the idea and to become acquainted with the human soul. He sat down alone to his dinner—an evenly featured young man with a well modeled head and an increasing firmness of mouth. His back was straight and his eyes were full of the passage of thought. At that moment Mary Eastwood was writing him a note.

CHAPTER XIV

TWO LETTERS

DINNER helped to neutralize his hurt. He was, as it were, lame and dumb, but alive and looking about him. There was Mary's disdain and Paulter's hatred. The night's adventure surely would put something like finality on the matter of Paulter. With regard to Mary, Kendry's holding the feminine mould for the more deeply, delicately susceptible now enabled the sprouting of a theory that her sharpness toward him had been the sharpness of a pain which he stupidly, masculinely had visited upon her. There was this thought and there was the prospect of an uninterrupted communion on the mountain side with a young woman at whom merely to gaze was a balm and a delight. He returned late to find Eastwood, with no trace of last night's brusqueness, waiting in the lobby of the hotel.

"A little early," Eastwood lounged in Kendry's library, close to a bottle, "because I've been having a talk about you with Mary. What's this symptom she calls your 'idea?'" he grinned. "It seems to have impressed Miss Marr." Kendry looked at East-

wood's double chin, his untroubled mouth, the heavy diamond on the finger embracing the whiskey glass.

"It's the idea of something ultimate to live for after eating and drinking and building a sky-scraper; an idea of the thing most worth while," Kendry said. Eastwood sat up.

"A stained-glass paradise?" he said. "Mab will never stand it, old chap!"

"Not even the kind of stained glass you are holding in your fat fist," Kendry allowed himself. "It's no more religion than money is religion to people at the money stage."

"Well, how do you bet on it? What are the hurdles?"

"I couldn't make it seem sane to you, old man," Kendry said. "It has to be distilled out of the top of a tall tree; it's the sixth sense of direction; it's the explanation and satisfaction of love, marriage, parenthood, citizenship—everything but death. Do you want some more? I can keep this up all night!" Eastwood spoke across his glass.

"What diet goes with this?" he quizzed.

"The same old apple on a fish-pole tied to your headstall," Kendry said, unteased. Eastwood mused.

"Anyway," he said, "Mab will turn it all down. She'd have you searched for it at the church door!" He shook his head. "Your white silk balloon won't go up because you've got Miss Marr in it!" he pronounced. "Of course it's not my affair," his state-

ment went unchallenged; "but why don't you let me handle this business of Paulter for the good I get out for Miss Marr, as *I* understand her case? It has nothing to do with Mab."

"My course is determined by the 'idea,'" Kendry said. "I saw Mary this afternoon."

"Without staking out a reason for calling again to-night? Now do you think she'll let any kind of hand-painted 'idea' stand between her and what she owns?"

"She might let it be the common point to draw us together," Kendry said, pacing the floor. "You make me look like a gingerbread parson," he exclaimed, vexed at having yielded so much of his hopes. "I'm only twenty-four years old! My idea isn't a complexion pill! It's a battle horse, and I'll do a few jumps that will make you sit up, one of these days. But while I'm learning to ride it, give me room to tumble off in!" Eastwood looked at him with some approval.

"But you talk about a 'common point,'" he said. "I merely wish to say that I have been Mab's brother ever since she was born, and she's more years to the good than look best on a marriage license. I'll tell you what will be the common point with Mab. It will be Mab. She's a Europeo-maniac—and that's the Americanest thing with hairpins. She turns around on her pivot and thinks she's an aristocrat. Well, you've only got to let her think she's made a mor-

ganatic marriage and she'll have a sorrowing love for you all your life!" He took a breath. "You and she could double your joint fortune in ten years. This town will never go backwards again. Lord, how long does it take you to sense a letter from a lady, on your own table!" he pointed.

Kendry pocketed Mary's letter, together with another in a writing he did not know. He said he had a brief engagement with a man. He left Eastwood an extra bottle and a diagram sent by the Secret Service Agent showing the meeting place of the party whose exploit presently would so concern the fortunes of Arthur Paulter.

It would be a relief to get away from Eastwood, and that it was after one in the morning would not prevent his finding Chan Kow. Apparently there never was a time of night when he could not be found beneath his lantern lights. Kendry avoided the locality near the rendezvous appointed by Kelly. He went by California Street, where the last street cars, with their double clang of gong and their rattle of ratchet on cable-grip, trundled up with headlights shining on deserted streets. He turned into a by-way where the electric lamps threw still shadows of balconies and wooden awnings against houses which gave no illumination from within. In the distances the clash of cymbals and the rapid drum against the soaring fiddle escaped from closed shutters and betokened banquets or propitiations of the gods. The air escaped

from crevices in worn partitions and drifted out through grimy halls, bearing the fumes of opium, of acrid tobacco moistened with brandy, of salted sea-food and noisome vegetables, and of the odor that clings mustily to fabrics imported from the coast of Asia. Words came, too, in a language whose four intonations made it seem half spoken, half sung.

At each forbidden gambling house the voices rose from back of heavy doors, guarded latticed and screened windows, where hid the discriminating hand that held the latch string. From one cellar rose the rumble of many sewing machines. He saw a white man leaning in a shadow, with a private watchman's star glinting from his citizen's clothes. The fierce blurred eyes of a hard-mouthed Celestial with loose scalp-locks took notice of him. From a dark hallway plastered with Chinese lettering on red posters an American woman, aged, bedraggled, leered back at Kendry. Two weazened, beardless faces under narrow brimed soft hats drooped along with mutually supporting shoulders; their bodies would have shown countless wounds from the hollow needle. They disappeared into black holes below street level. All these apparitions were the links between the silent starry night without and the crowded activities of trade, pleasure and vice within, sealed from the foreign devil's interfering conscience by the universal wooden shutter.

The alley at whose blind end was Chan Kow's door

was contrastingly without suggestion of inner life. Kendry enjoyed the presence of a pistol in his pocket, to balance the shadows wherein he could imagine himself surprised by such a man as Arthur Paulter. There was no one in sight. Kendry lifted the folding door in the sidewalk and pressed the point of his penknife through the small hole in the panel at the foot of the steps. He presently began to wonder whether Chan Kow, after what must have been strenuous days, had not declared a period of seclusion for himself. Then he observed that the distant electric bell gave no response to his pressure with the penknife. He tried the latch. The door swung open. If a careless servant had so left Chan Kow's stronghold exposed to his enemies it was a part of friendliness to inform him. Kendry lighted the candle end he had provided for the undertaking with Kelly. To his steps along the familiar musty passage toward the stairs he heard no answering stir from above. He knocked on the joists over his head, preferring not to be met as an intruder. Then he ascended and knocked at the first of those rooms where he had begun to believe women of his own race were dwelling in primeval relationship to the master. There was no reply, but he did not turn the knob. He called the name of Chan Kow, to an empty echo. Had Chan Kow fled? Kendry opened the door to the garden. The draught blew out his candle, but the starlight showed the way. The varnished red silk lanterns, without lights, still hung at

the balconies; the dwarf pine stood unchanged. But across, in the wing where Chan Kow had his private chambers, the lower room was stripped of its carvings and bare of its furniture. Chan Kow had departed and he had not wished Kendry to know when or whither. Reminiscence led Kendry to ascend to where he first had spoken of Paulter to the two older men. He smiled at the memory of it. The still sky glittered from over the low roof opposite. The doors to the balcony were closed; but the peaceful air of this strange seclusion was not yet stale. He crossed for a look out on the balconies and stumbled over a prostrate man.

It caused him to spring back to the wall, unhandily seeking his pistol. After a moment he retreated to the cover of the stair opening and relighted his candle.

The body lay in the blood from a heavy slanting cut at the side of the neck. The diminutive senile frame with its false cue included, might have weighed a hundred pounds. The small eyes, glassy in the still flame of the candle, had been canny and penetrating. Kendry recalled the dried skin of the little man who had sat here in blank unresponsiveness to his first mention of the name of Paulter. Then he remembered the hatchet strapped on Chan Kow's arm. How much had Kendry's visit on that night counted in the chain of events that finished with this murder, in the last of Chan Kow's intrigues in a Chinatown that perhaps had become too dangerous for him. It was Kendry's

farewell to that unfathomable old man. He could not forbear drawing his pistol as he looked to begin his retreat. Then the folded paper in the dead man's fingers seemed to demand his attention. Kendry listened. What had been silence now contained the distant barking of a dog, the moan of a fiddle from over the housetops seeking entrance at the balcony doors. He drew the paper forth, apprehensive of giving motion to the lifeless hand. The message was in French:

"To my friend Jack: By the one honest service of this double-faced Ting Lee, his enemy:

"In spring, when the sap is in the branch, the blossom pushes from the twig: and its fragrance and defenseless beauty are to cherish or to blast. When no blossom pushes from the twig, then either it is not spring or there is no sap in the branch, or both. This is a little more than wisdom. Therefore it may be perceived by a young man: who need not waste his youth in the shadow of a hollow bough."

In that lonely chamber it bore no significance to John Kendry. He made haste for the living air. He stuffed the paper into his pocket, where it lay between the unopened envelope of Mary Eastwood and the unopened letter whose writing was unfamiliar to him.

CHAPTER XV

A TRANSACTION IN OXYGEN

THE memory of that still room vibrated above the thought of what he next was bent on. To go with other armed men and surprise a group of criminals in their den gave him no heroic thrill. He came into a close and grimy alley with high buildings on both sides, of brick and loosening stucco. All the doors were narrow and of thick wood; all the lower windows were small and square and above hand reach from the pavement. These had no casements: only coarse wire netting, man-proof, offered itself to the weather. An occasional window acted as a frame, artfully lighted; the living picture was the head and shoulders of a Chinese slave girl, alluringly alone, in modest profile, painted and penciled and gaudily decked. Of the windows that were dark one was next the unclosed doorway marked on Kelly's diagram. A policeman was pacing through the alley as Kendry passed it. Returning when the policeman was gone Kendry dove into the silent darkness and met a reassuring syllable from the dim form of Eastwood. Kelly pulled them by the sleeves. They groped by a double turn in the

corridor, to where he lighted a candle and led them down some winding stairs. The place had been pretentious in the '50's, the walnut balustrade declared. It grew more musty and odorous while they descended farther creaking steps, stretching over broken treads. On the dirt floor of the cellar there was a gaseous moisture as of seepage from imperfect drains. They walked looking at the back of Kelly's small head. It flattened into thin cords, unpleasantly. His stature took no heed of the floor joists to which they had to stoop. Around in an ell he lifted a trap in the floor and held his candle in the still less welcome air that rushed up through it.

"You want me to go first, and one of you guard the rear?" he said, without taking his eyes from the black hole into which he peered.

"It's my privilege to go first," Kendry said. To appear to Paulter without the supporting presence of a Federal officer appealed to his pride. He dropped through the trap, expanding his lungs for more air. He wanted the adventure to be over. It was mere dull drudgery in the service of the idea. The murder at the theater, the body at Chan Kow's, the intrigues he imagined of Paulter, all were a surfeit at one with the atmosphere he was trying to breathe. He made a note that he would take the first morning boat to the freshness of the mountain, there to erase from memory this final expedition into the spot of decay. He would linger near the mountain till the moment when

he should meet Miss Marr. Kelly pointed down to them a direction for their cautious approach.

"Tell 'em 'hands up'; see all there is to see; then back out. A man ain't going to jail for twenty years, if he can prevent it," he grimly said, staring at space.

They left him a shadow from above, pistol in hand. Their candles showed a studded door which, if men were at work beyond it, promised an atmosphere less distressing. The steel bar, fastening it on the outside, seemed to prove that there was more than one entrance to the coiners' retreat. The two pulled open the door less with prudence than with the insistent thought of air. It swung to again behind them, on canted hinges; the foulness was increasing; there was the necessity of descending farther into an effluvia that gave them pause.

"This is the last door for me," Eastwood panted, at the foot of the steep steps. Here they opened into a space cut out of the scaling rock, where the air struck on their lungs like a tangible substance and where still there was no sign of human activity. Out of it they quickened their pace along a winding tunnel, beads rising on their brows. It was no longer possible to breathe through their nostrils. They came into a chamber the counterpart of the one they had left. Kendry brought up abhorrently pointing to the ground.

"More dead men!" he protested. Eastwood supported himself against the wall. He seemed to will

Kendry to be first to sound the obvious need of retreat. Those who lay on the ground were the Pole and the sailor, with whom, at the restaurant, in the presence of Kelly, alias Collins, Kendry had first discussed counterfeiting in Chinatown. Their clothes were torn away at their chests, but they bore no sign of wounds. Kendry felt the heart of the Pole: the man was not yet dead. Involuntarily Kendry turned his glance to the tunnel, as if someone was pursuing him.

"Yes, yes—out of this!" Eastwood uttered. Kendry clapped him on the shoulder:

"Not without them!" Eastwood halted; but his eyes did not seek the men on the ground. Kendry raised the lighter of them in his arms and staggered into the tunnel. Eastwood caught him by the wrists.

They heard someone bounding down the steps. The door slammed. The bolts shot. The footsteps began leisurely ascending again.

Kendry let the body of the Pole slide to the ground. There came over him a wave of helplessness and it seemed as if he were trying to live on the bottom of the sea.

They ran carroming against the winding wall. They beat on the door with their pistol butts, loudly commanding Kelly to return. They threw off their coats and tore off their collars. They lost recognition of each other's presence; Kendry ran back through

the lengthening distance to where the sailor lay. He found no outlet; he saw no splinter that could be used against the door. Without purpose he started to return to it. The two collided at the middle of the passage, their hands on each other's shoulders, their fingers dripping with candle grease. Eastwood reeled against the wall; his face was gray and glistening with sweat. Without volition he discharged his pistol into the creviced stone. The two stumbled away from the suffocating smoke, in opposite directions, along the tunnel that appeared to lengthen as they ran. It was no longer possible to keep one's feet. Kendry dropped on his hands and knees beside the form of the sailor. It was growing time to halt, to pull one's self together, to rest and to think.

He must keep controlled, he said, to the candle that was burning the hollow of his hand. Eastwood was beating on the door again: that was foolish, that was panic-stricken. Kelly would never open that door. One must rest, one must reduce one's effort. One must lie out flat and not let the candle set one on fire.

It lessened the difficulty of breathing. One must not stir a finger till one had figured what one was to do. Every movement of a muscle ate the oxygen from the blood.

Eastwood was still tattooing on the door—violent action such as doubtless had overcome the sailor and the Pole, though it was not plain how they had fallen

so far from the entrance. Even the candle ate up oxygen, though to call Eastwood's attention to this would eat up more. Presently he would blow out his own. It threw the sharp shadows of the projecting rock—rock everywhere. There was a piece of paper pinned on the sailor's coat. Was it more nonsense from Chan Kow? He must see, slowly, without waste of effort. It was only the sailor's name, and the Pole's, rudely written, with their abodes and without comment. They would die; but he had no intention of dying; he must think.

First: for emergency, for in case of failure, he, too, must write. He sat up against the wall. He brought out the two letters, the message from Chan Kow, with one grasp.

After a little while he laid hold of his pencil. He must write while his mind was clear, while the little groan still held down at the bottom of his heart. It never should be allowed to rise; he presently would have a plan; but he reached for a piece of paper to write on.

"In spring, when the sap is in the branch—" No! The meaningless words would be taken for ravings of his own. He would use the back of this envelope from Mary—it was ridiculous that he had not yet opened it. As soon as he had written something to her, he would. He must write to Mary and he must write to Miss Marr—to Ethel; no other address would express his friendly, his brotherly, his fatherly solici-

tude. When that labor was over he would revolve his plan for getting out of this. He began on the back of Mary's envelope:

DEAR ETHEL MARR:

She must understand that he could spare only time for getting strength to assault that door. He stared at the envelope. His breath came noisily from a dried throat. The words: "Dear Ethel, Dear Ethel, Dear Ethel," ran in a circle around his brain. He would write to Ethel, then he would read Mary's letter. Then he would write to Mary—making these communications served the remote contingency of his failing at the door. It was a crisis he was living through, a serious one; and he must get accustomed to the atmosphere. He presently should. By Jove, he then would think out something. Something with a pen-knife and an iron will. There was nothing real in the world but will, he informed the stones, ignoring passion, ignoring death. Eastwood ought to have kept up that companionable little drumming on the door. "Dear Ethel, Dear Ethel, Dear Ethel—" He thrust out his legs and jammed his head mercilessly against the wall:

GOOD SISTER ETHEL:

If the world moves through new space I thought I had come to where one looks overboard and see her cut the waters of eternity. I thought I caught a glimpse of the Direction, the Explanation, the Satisfaction, the Destination. But the candle smokes horribly—

It was better to unbutton, to remove, carefully, bare to the waist, than convulsively to clutch and tear. The effort brought him to drop the envelope and lean more comfortably on his elbow. Trust him to be canny with that little supply of oxygen; he would light the world from it, yet! His finger touched the other letter: something to coax him to be still till he could crawl over the mountainous body of the Pole and make that journey through the tunnel. The writing was strong, yet smaller and a little more rounded than Mary's. It was a woman's writing. It was good to have another friend:

DEAR MR. KENDRY:

That was out of the quality of our acquaintance, for my bow to be ambiguous. I should like to talk to you on the mountain. Often when I have been alone there I have seen life as you see it—only less clearly and deeply and hopefully. But you'll have reflected that my going there wouldn't be wise.

There are greater things stirring than new garments. We shall have left Telegraph Hill. If I don't give you my new address your quick understanding will not charge me severely. I wish, you the happiness you look forward to in the ways I think I divine. There will come a time when the values of some quantities will have changed and much of our work and danger will be past. So I take some comfort in believing that your interest in me will have survived grey hairs; and that some day, when no one will care whom I go to meet, there still will be the mountain—with the manzanita still flowering; the ceanothus as fragrant as now. I shall never be too old for the mountain. I shall die on my way to its summit. May you, too, never be too old for it. And I shall faithfully be your friend Ethel Marr.

He must get to that door now: he must get where there was food for his heart to do for her what the idea commanded him! She couldn't accomplish her destiny without him. The duty of reading Mary's letter, too; then—to start. He groped for the letter. The candle flame was amber and black.

“When the blossom does not push from the twig—” No! It was a stupid affront if he couldn't recognize the hand of Mary Eastwood!

You tore off so madly, dear Jack, that it escaped me to ask you to dinner soon. If not to-night, then to-morrow night. Mother goes to Menlo; Hal dines at his club. Don't be silly when this comes to you. I'm a dreadfully difficult person. I always shall be.

Devotedly yours,
Mary.

A little punctuation would have changed that: “I always shall be devotedly yours, Mary!” A little punctuation, a little punctuation, a little punctuation. The candle cocked its wick at him, from a puddle of grease. Eastwood must have sauntered home, long ago. But a letter must go to Mary. Where had he left off in the one he had begun to her? He could lay hold of it without help. This: “the Satisfaction, the Destination. But the candle smokes horribly——”

“Nevertheless,” he went on with it, “your invitation to dinner is delightful. I shall be there *before* our hair is gray. I shall die on my way to the ceanothus blossom, in the spring, when the sap——”

When the sap, when the sap, when the sap—he more feasibly rolled over on his back. His hand extinguished the sputtering of the candle. Of course, that saved the oxygen the candle wished to steal from him. Once with the weight of the ceiling off his chest, he would go ahead with the idea. The idea did not wish to hurt anyone. God, he tore at the muscles of his chest, he would go ahead with it anyway! If the sailor wouldn't take the letter to Mary, someone else should. Damn the laziness of the sailor. One had never dined alone with Mab; it meant having her consent; it meant firing her cold lips before the evening was out. Cold lips—cold lips—Ethel Marr would take the letter! Ethel Marr would do him any deed so vital to his happiness. Excellent! Ethel had put a special delivery stamp on it; she was delivering it herself. That erectness, that smoothness on ball of foot—most beautiful movement of perfect limbs and soundest heart on service bent! The street was clean and wind swept; the sun shone coolly, brightly, glistening in her hair. Her eyes widened, clearly to see her sweet blue destination, her duty to be done without a blur. This was the corner where Mary dwelt. The door of Mary's house was shut. Ethel's blue serge had a tiny darn in it. What, ye tiny darns? The woman, the woman, within ye! Up the steps. He caught a glimpse of a white petticoat. She smiled at the blank door. Both her dear hands held his letter. The door would not open, but she smiled and the cor-

ners of her mouth were a curve that contained all the loveliness in the world. Loveliness in the world, loveliness—loveliness in the world! But the door would not open and the candle was dead. There was no sap in it, or it was not spring, or both. She ought not to be out at midnight, alone! Alone, alone—and they would not open the door. Open the door—the door—the door——

CHAPTER XVI

RICH YOUNG MEN

WITHOUT a conscious process it had established itself for him that by the parting of his sealed lids he could look into the eyes of Ethel Marr. Her hair would be shedding light; she would be kneeling and pressing her fingers. Beyond would be the glory of great still distance—mountains and verdure and pointed trees bathed in the air of the sea.

When, by a reflex beyond his control, as from cold water dashed in his face, he did look up, the vision dissolved. The light was opaquely from one side, obscured by the movement of figures he did not examine. If the air was not that of a pest-hole, it yet was not that of the sea. Save for the hovering figures the room was a barren space of grimy walls. Time lapsed without registering its passage. The worst was over: he no longer offered the resistance necessary to pain. Hidden hands pulled his clothing together at the chest and thrust his arms into his coat.

Farther down than his sense of self-preservation lay pride. They supported him on his feet. Pride responded with some self-control. He accepted a degree of responsibility, collapsing though his heart seemed.

There had been murders: in a theater, in a lonely house, in a pit beneath the ground. Each one had made a slice in his brain. The only place where that could be cured was on the top of a mountain.

"Cab!" he swayed. There was some conversation. He received from it a faint impression of class, of locution foreign to him. The corridor opened into the cab. The door of the cab was the door of the corridor. The air of the cab was the air of the sea. The line of the moving curb was the horizon. His imagination made demand for action, grinding against his forehead; but his muscles hung without twitching. He had existed forever; only once had he been in the heaven of music and movement. The Pyrric Dancers, winding rhythmically above his mantel, the fire playing on the coals—they were in that heaven. He was not able to wish to speak.

"Oh, I guess you can answer a question!" Paulter said. "Drink it down!"

The liquor, by a trick of the brain—the stirring of a memory by circumstances similar to those that had created it, caused him again to expect the troubled waiting eyes under a mountain cypress branch. He looked up at thin straight lips.

"Now, what will you give for yourself?" Paulter said, swinging his leg from the table where he brushed aside the books and papers. "You started out to cut a hole in the air, and you've just been handed back to yourself in a spoon!" He took up a paper-covered

book. "That explains you; you can speak three foreign languages, maybe. But you can't speak the American language and you can't play the American game! I've taken all your chips and I'm here to cash 'em in!" He slapped down the book.

Kendry's hand rose uncertainly toward the electric button that would call a servant. He found himself promptly drawn away from it in his chair. A glimmer of light came into his eye.

"I ain't going to hurt you!" Paulter said. "I'll just boil you down and show you what's left, before we ring any bells. You got taken with Miss Marr. You thought she'd be a touching little proposition for a while. You piped me off for a crook, after what you'd read in the paper; and you thought you'd land *me*—dead easy, somewhere off the earth. You can pinch me and see if I'm here. That man Collins was the tinsmith *you* ought to have been looking for; he put a dog collar on you and took you out for a walk. He's over the border by now. Why, you stirred things up so for your friend Chan Kow that he's gone up in a balloon, I guess! He don't know what you *will* do! You wanted to put me behind the grid, eh? I could have let you fry, down in that hole; you'd have been about done in another three hours. You'd have been out of my way. I just pulled the lid off out of pure generosity; and I saved the lives of the whole bunch of you!" Kendry's chin had settled on his chest.

"Foolish," he murmured. "How much do you want?" Paulter leaned forward and shook his forefinger.

"You can't buy me and you can't pay me with money! Now, look here," he moderated, "let's settle this as between two gentlemen. I don't want to hurt your feelings; but you haven't made good with Miss Marr, you sure haven't; and when you tried to do me, you fell down. That's all right: you can get busy somewhere else quick enough. But I want to relieve the anxiety of Miss Marr's mother, see? Now, as a gentleman, what's your proposition, when I've just handed you your life?"

Kendry half opened his eyes.

"What's yours?" he said.

Paulter tossed his head.

"Would I have to teach a gentleman what proposition he *ought* to make?"

"You'll have to tell me!" Kendry hugely sighed.

"Well, I will tell you!" Paulter burst. But he hesitated; for once he looked from Kendry's dull attention on him to the fire. "If it was me," he complained, "I'd give my word that I'd cut Miss Marr out, that I wouldn't see her after this, for good, ever!" He finished with an injured look: "I wouldn't take something for nothing!" Kendry appeared to wait for him to go on. "I didn't stand down there at the door and try to bargain with you for your life," Paulter said. A lock of his hair was plastered over his

forehead; the firelight brought out the shadows of the pockmarks under his cheek bones.

"How did you know that I was there?"

"I ain't going to tell you how," Paulter shortly said.

"You've heard my proposition. What do you say?"

"If I decide on it, you'll get out?"

"I ain't aching for your society," Paulter shrugged, with the restraint of some hopefulness. He got down and drummed on the table.

"Then draw on me at the bank. My friendships are not for sale. Now get out. I want to die." Kendry closed his eyes. The man stood over him with bloodless face.

"By God!" he began, through his teeth. There was a silence in which the figure in the chair stayed motionless. Paulter laughed. "Hell!" he said. He jammed on his hat and went to the door. "You've got her handwriting in your pocket; I'll take charge of that!" He strode back. He knocked down Kendry's arm. Again he turned to the pallid face that ignored him. "This is the last communication you'll get from Ethel Marr!" he said.

The lights from the thoroughfare came up through the windows. The traffic swelled, then declined; the fire sank with it. After his feeble struggle Kendry had not shifted in his chair. A servant, after several knocks, entered and turned on a light and drew the shades. There followed and was left alone with Kendry a young woman who refrained from speaking.

She stood looking to the armchair. Kendry's breathing was regular, if faint; his pallor was not of the worst. She took in the Pyrrhic Dancers, the bust of the Unknown Lady, the photograph of an obscure Madonna in Siena, set against the restful tint of the walls. To her the place was rich and warm and desirable; the dark oak and leather were of masculine strength—a bulwark against the harsher world without. She sighed. Her skin was of too milky a whiteness, with a spot of color on cheekbones a little prominent beneath her pale blue eyes. Her hand strayed to the books on the table while her glance kept returning to Kendry. Her figure was slight, but her bust was full; arrayed against her youth were two thin lines above the corners of her mouth.

At the end of her inspection she stole to the door of his bedroom. She surveyed it in what light entered from behind her. The clock on his dressing table stood at ten; she turned back the hands to seven.

She knelt before him, laying coals on the fire, one by one. She touched his hand with the tip of her nose, then touched her nose to her own hand. She left him with a rug laid over his knees and a better light on his face from the reviving flames, while she departed into his bedroom with her basket suit case. The disappearance of her hat and coat behind a chair showed her in a white duck skirt and a white silk waist with deep white cuffs and collar and a shaped apron whose strings crossed at the back. Her prep-

arations before his mirror were mixed with an interest in the articles on the table, which she weighed and caressed and sighed over. When she had rearranged her hair and topped it with an elaborate white cap, she drew from her pocket a little pad of paper leaves. She listened; then one of the leaves yielded up its rosy hue to the two regions beneath her eyes.

Kendry had not stirred. In her low-heeled slippers she could make that intimate examination of his books, his pictures, the table drawers, his desk, for which she had longed. There was quality in everything, quality which the letters, if they were otherwise uninteresting, proved to be expensive. When she had exhausted the room the clock stood at eight. She stood for a while gazing for the first time intently and subjectively into his face. There came into her own a little love, a little reality.

Afterward he awoke to see her seated on the arm of the opposite chair, her chin in her hand, gazing into the firelight. There was the aroma of coffee from his own sideboard. Some shapely inches of black stocking showed against her petticoat. The fire cast up color and rounding shadow advantageously on her profile. Some noise had awakened him. She did not turn till he spoke.

"Georgiana!" Kendry said. She sat up as if startled, then smiled.

"They sent word for somebody. I thought a cousin would *just* do—a little more than a stranger

and so *much* less than a sister!" she tossed him. He stared in faint appreciation of her going for his coffee. While he drank she felt his forehead, resting on the arm of his chair. "You need a little spoiling, I guess," she tapped his hand. "I'll ring for some one to undress you."

She knelt at his feet, toasting biscuits by the fire. "I shall have a chance to become acquainted with my rare cousin!" she said. "Think what some women would give to be here to-night!"

"Hm—nosegays!" Kendry tried to meet her. He had never kept a valet; a bell-boy came and managed to make a more presentable invalid of him. When the boy had departed she opened his door again, bearing more coffee and the toast. With a surprising professional knack she raised him to a sitting posture.

"Baby!" she giggled. "You'll soon be toddling about. We'll never get acquainted. It takes me back a good many years to be mauling you this way!" He sought to dissimulate an unreasoning embarrassment.

"How are you getting on?" he managed to say. She quickly shrugged.

"You'd better drop the subject of me. I'm twenty-four; I'm a trained nurse. When I'm not on a case I board in hall rooms. I don't *love* anybody. That's how I'm getting on." She seemed to shake her own personality from her. "How are you getting on?" she sat on the edge of the bed. Kendry wearily answered.

"Ready to give it all up," he said. Miss Baine leaned forward to him.

"So?" she brilliantly said. "I could bring you to life with the mention of a name: *Miss Marr!*" He stared blankly. "You're pretending not to be wild about her!" she charged again. But he was dull-eyed. The inquiry faded from her and a new light came, stimulating, fixed on him. "Don't you think I am good to volunteer, when you always take so little interest in me? Still, since I'm a cousin you treat so much like a stranger, perhaps that adds to the excitement of being here. When the bell-boy sees that clock I shall have to *remember* that I'm your cousin, though!" Kendry nodded.

"Good of you to come. I'll send you home in a carriage, if you'll ring," he leaned back. She seemed to be contemplating his closed eyes.

"I can properly stay till I've put you to sleep, poor boy. You haven't any distressing symptoms, except weariness," she lightly smoothed his hand.

"It's more than weariness," he said grimly without opening his eyes: "it's the wisdom of the dead. I can see the uselessness of the whole game!"

A little more seriousness would have been her wisdom. "Poor doggie—was he weary!" Georgiana pouted, her hands denting the coverlet. Kendry opened his eyes. "Now, you shall see what a good doctor I am! *I'm* the medicine, myself. Not that I'm so easy to take," she went lightly on. His re-

sponse came faintly to the corners of his mouth. "But I'm worth taking. I mean that you must stop thinking about yourself, and you must begin to think about me. As a gentleman and a cousin, you must. Because I'm not happy, and I'm not fortunate."

She was gravely bent on him, her lip caught under her teeth. Certainly her leaning forward, her bare arms, made her alluring. His sense of a present indifference was a sense of premature old age. It struck him with its novelty. He wondered how long he could listen to her with such inward detachment.

"Go on," he laughed, not unkindly.

"Oh, the medicine is real!" she welled. "I shouldn't offer it to anyone but you. How should *you* like to go into the houses of stupid women to do all these tender things for their people—people you don't care about; to bring in all the strength and patience and skill they don't possess; and to give that out day after day, not for *love*, but only for a living! It isn't very decent!" she was successfully appealing to him. "And the men," she added—"they're not so dreadfully handsome as you are, Jack!"

"There's no accounting for taste," he said; and she did not notice the distinction between the plural and the singular. But his voice was indulgent. "You won't last long; I shall meet you and hear you wish you were a trained nurse again. That costume is too engaging; and you've a good color——"

"I shouldn't expect to be freezing up just at this

moment!" she said for him, with a glance about the room. "It's high noon with me; every hour from now is one toward sunset. I'm looking cheerful, I hope; but I could weep—this minute!" she let her eyes fill. Kendry's sympathy had a color of annoyance.

"But, my dear, anyone so fetching as you has only to wait a while." She put down her handkerchief.

"I'm willing to, patiently, if *you* say so!" she straightened. The handkerchief hid itself. "It's time for me to put you to sleep."

He saw the light go out in the other room. He was blankly awake. She then screened from him the light by the dressing-table.

"That coffee must have been terrifically strong!" he sighed.

"Oh, you're not so dreadfully awake," said Georgiana. "But if you wish to sleep, you shall." She began stroking his forehead. The touch was so light that it took his concentrated attention to remain certain that the process kept on. He had a curious impression of lateness of the hour. Habituation had taught him the arrangement of sounds to be associated with midnight. He was struck by the interval between the gongs of the street cars, between the rumbling of a carriage here and there. She turned out the light and the fire played on the walls from beyond the door. She seemed to sit by his head.

"Isn't it getting late for you?" he murmured, to the return of her fingers.

"I shall stay till I'm sure of you," she softly said. "But you must give yourself up; for of course I can't stay forever. Else I should be compromised; and then you'd have to marry me, dear Jack—wouldn't you?" He made no answer. "And *then* wouldn't you have a time!" she laughed. The warming tips of her fingers were not soporific; at first they stimulated his brain. He tried to arrange in order the events of the last two days. He failed. He began trying to think through the fingers into the brain that actuated them. It was a feminine mysterious brain. His blood was responding.

"Does the little boy like this?" she whispered, her cap grazing his ear.

"Won't say I don't," Kendry muttered. "But your carriage——?"

"When I feel you don't want me, I'll disappear," she mildly said. He reflected that he could safely leave her to her own care. The finger tips kept on, elusively, insidiously. He decided to simulate sleep. To sleep and never to awake: that would remove much that was tempting and hollow, much that was disheartening and dull; it would take away the burden of a large fortune. Her breath came across his brow. He began inspiring long and regularly. His last impression was that she stole out of the room.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DESERT OF DOUBT

HE dozed and dozed again before he responded to the clatter of the street and accepted the beginning of another day. Georgiana Baine's presence seemed to linger. The shade swayed in the air from the half closed window; it heightened the rounded shadow of a mass beneath the rug he remembered leaving by the fire.

At his movement her hand fell across from her eyes, brushing her disordered hair. Her cap was missing; she was smiling in her sleep.

Kendry looked to the doors. He listened for footsteps along the corridor; it was well in the forenoon. She was awake, brightly spying him.

"Poor old dead man!" she sighed, motionless. She watched his mouth.

"Do you realize that it's morning?" said Kendry. Her eye shot at his, then traveled to the ceiling. She started up and looked to the window.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh!" she hurried, clutching her hair, without a look behind her. Kendry stared at the closed door.

He began to hope that she had gone home. It would be the tasteful thing. He was not going to dis-

tress himself about what people might say, might think. The hotel was large; no one who had not watched his door for the last fourteen hours could speak with authority. It was more than four years since he had seen his cousin; he could not remember her making much of the occasion then. He would send her some valuable acknowledgment of her attention and the incident would be closed.

She appeared to him bearing the tray. Her head was erect; her eyes looked to her breast. Her hair she had combed over her ears and knotted at the neck. Only her mouth, by an occasional quiver at the corners gave life to her countenance. Thus she waited while uncomfortably he ate.

He thought of nothing to say that might not precipitate the atmospheric moisture. Mechanically she bore away the tray, without having lifted her eyes. She came back to the rug and presently laid hold of it and began to fold it. Kendry cleared his throat. The sound caused the rug to leave her hands. She turned away and covered her face with her handkerchief.

"Georgiana!" he protested. Her right hand dropped next him. He took it firmly in his own. "What can be the matter?" he inquired. Her fingers lightly pressed his own.

"You can't do that," she began to draw her hand away. "I don't belong to you." He accepted her correction and she angrily choked.

"But what's the matter?" he suffered.

"That bell-boy; it was the same one as last night. He said things!"

Kendry brought his fist down on his knee. "What did he say to you?" he demanded. Her head shook.

"Not with his tongue, not to *me!*" she wept. "He—he only *looked* things. I'm compromised. I—I didn't think, when I said that to you in jest last night, that I—should be standing here now, at the mercy—the mercy!" she ceased to articulate. It seemed an hiatus for a generous and a rich young man to fill.

"Try a couple of boiled eggs," said Kendry. "I've often felt this way myself before breakfast, though not under these unusual circumstances. Besides," he spanked his pillow, "there's a question I want to ask you."

"What is it?" she mournfully turned.

"You fell asleep while you were so thoughtfully watching over me?" She nodded. "Where's your cap?" said Kendry.

"Out there," she stupidly pointed. "Why?" Kendry scanned her. There was no mirror in his drawing-room. One of her cheeks was pink, the other chalky white.

"Because," said Kendry, "I was afraid you might have fallen asleep with it on—and rumped it. But you didn't. I didn't see you take it out with you just now." She slowly put his conclusions together.

"Thank you," she coldly said. She moved to the foot of his bed; the two lines stood out above her mouth. "You don't think it's serious," she said. "You don't count the woman in the case. Miss Marr. She told me to come here. She expected me to meet her at the ferry last night, and tell her how you were. Perhaps she's still waiting there."

"You know Miss Marr?"

"We went to the High School at the same time, while you were being taken abroad. Just think how much sooner you'd have met her, if your father hadn't been so well off! They've taken a house near where I board when I'm across the bay. I happened to speak of you and she couldn't keep still about having met you on the mountain that way."

"Why should she?" said Kendry. Georgiana faintly smiled.

"She wanted to know everything about you. She'll want to know why I didn't turn up at the ferry. I can't tell her the truth because she's in love with you." Kendry's brow rose. "And if I lie to her she'll find it out." He had the thrill of becoming well acquainted with his cousin. "What do you advise me to do?" she asked of the bed-post.

"I advise you, Georgiana, to tell as much of the truth about yourself as you think you can stand," said Kendry. "I'll send you a comfortable check. If any one asks you about me, tell the whole truth!"

Georgiana turned away toward the mirror. A

little smile hardened her. "If it had been Ethel Marr—" she began.

"Where shall I send your check?" Kendry roared. At which she left him without a word.

At her closing of the door to the corridor the window shade had rustled derisively to him. He sank to the pillows. This was the way he could put to flight a woman. With men, once he had pushed into the waters where they indiscriminately mixed, he monotonously had failed.

Out of his moral convictions he had undertaken to accelerate the development of Ethel Marr in the happier planes she reached for. He had met with total defeat, and he was in a mood for self-examination.

It had been from the fact of his wealth that his logical process had started; but his good will toward men and his optimistic belief in mankind had not been intended to be expressed, save incidentally, in alms. For what he was to try to do he had found reason in no scripture, but in himself. He wished to force himself upon no beneficiary, and for what he should accomplish he asked no reward after death, no recognition during life, and expected to take no greater self-esteem. His reward was to be the happiness in the doing. To his outlook the extinction of individuals was not the most fearsome of evils: life seemed full of greater peril and keener suffering than death; and he thought it a greater mercy to rescue a high type of individual from life than in behalf of a low type

of individual to delay the moment of death. If he took it upon himself to decide, for himself, who was of the higher and who was of the lower type, that—he would have explained—was *his* assumption in a world where every thinker's circle must be completed by an assumption cemented by faith. It was an assumption less thoughtfully, but no less actively, made every day by every man.

Thus he had gone athwart the human stream, and those who noticed him had viewed him askance. What they beheld was not a propagandum: it was John Kendry's idea of how actually he best might make himself glad that he had lived. If it had been a propagandum, rather than an example; if he had carried it about with him to expound, instead of only to live by, the world from Paulter to Eastwood and from Eastwood to heights far more exalted would have let him pass to his own music, with a gathering procession of proselytes behind. The world would have felt secure in thinking to detect his especial hope of self-aggrandizement.

Outside his windows the spirit of the times and the place determined the noisy traffic. For a conscience, an aspiration, a capability attuned to that spirit one kind of satisfaction awaited; and perhaps it was a legitimate one in the working out of the evolution of a race. But if a man believed that he had gone ahead of that satisfaction and left a greater part of the rest of the world behind, what was he to do?

Was he to sit and wait? Was he to return and tell of a new horizon for those who could not see and therefore would not and perhaps must be expected not to believe? And, crucially for Kendry, would enough of the rest ever catch up, ever see? Perhaps he was getting to the secret of the human instinct for propaganda he did not want to be alone; he could not maintain his faith entirely alone. And yet his idea was based on the principle that all faith must grow, not out of the ceaseless repetitions of other men, but for each man out of his own self-knowledge.

It would have been more fortunate had not loneliness been the marked note of his enfeebled condition in his bachelor chamber. He went back to his starting point, conceived in the health and high spirits of youth; his good will toward men, his general optimism. Whenever he had begun to explain himself at his club, with the men he found more congenial, or—to go at once to the point—with Mary Eastwood, from whose feminine heart he instinctively had expected understanding, he never had had the experience of meeting an enthusiasm that anticipated his point. If even the woman to whom he so had committed himself made him feel eccentric, his one escape appeared to be to jump, like a clown, through the paper disc of his idea. If he was wrong and the world was right, that disposed of the idea. If he was right and the world was wrong, it demolished his optimism, his good-will, which again disposed of the idea. And with

the idea must go his view of the mode of life most satisfying.

Such an alteration would carry with it a strange indifference to Mary Eastwood, thankless since it brought him more nearly into accord with her. It seemed to urge him as a prime consideration to look out of his window and to value places, as was Mary's habit; it made happiness more a place than a condition. When the balance was cast between men and institutions in one civilization and another his peregrinations showed him that there was but small variance. This, he was bound to believe, favored his own country, viewed at large. But, viewed from his personal standpoint, the outlook from any window he might choose in his own country—once the idea was gone—drew him less than a hundred others he could remember. One went to other lands for works and manifestations of more tempered order and grace and beauty; satisfactions of eye and ear and mind that stood ready to his grasp.

If he fled he should suffer a certain danger of contempt. There would be spectators. They inevitably would expect him to stay and grace the arena of his narrow experience with his martyred form. Though they had been ready to applaud the spectacle, yet on his flight they would shrug and knowingly smile. But should he stay for the sacrifice where no one of the onlookers would be willing to change rôles with him? He should be in contempt only of those who could

and would serve where he had deserted; and of these he knew none.

If he stayed he saw nothing but to "jump in"—to embrace the one opportunity of the place, to be a pioneer, to wield the axe in more or less indifference to the common weal; and, as a reward, to double and triple a fortune already more than sufficient to his needs.

He unsteadily dressed himself. A meal braced his nerves, but left him disinclined to move. He telephoned for his agent and devoted the rest of the afternoon to his affairs. He imagined himself an old man with shifting little eyes, sitting in a chair and presiding over a fortune that never could be large enough. Men who had business with him were for the first time directed to this apartment; in his rôle of ancient spider he dealt with them as keenly as they dealt with him. He made a profitable day of it. Some of them recast their opinion of him, and he was strengthened in his own. Yes, he could play the game, uprightly, conforming to all the rules. If already it hadn't been fulfilled in the blood he couldn't have grasped it so easily, so young. He saw the last man out and began pacing the floor, in a sense of drifting, of ennui, of the room having been vulgarized.

"Man delights me not—nor woman neither!" he laughed, "though one might argue from this hair-pin!" He tossed it into the grate. He was bodily weary, but he could no longer sit still; he was men-

tally weary but he could see no bright light ahead. He could rest and there would be a return of power, but there would be no return of inspiration. He had reasoned from the vague and the abstract to what had seemed the practical and the hopeful; now he was reasoning back into the desert of the abstract and the vague. The distances in that desert were infinite and the heights on the horizon were a mirage. The trackless stretches were dotted with dead men's bones.

He heard a familiar footstep in the corridor as he paced toward the door. It opened to Arthur Paulter, his cigar in the corner of his mouth, his hat a trifle on one side, his eyes half closed against the smoke through which the deliberate speech he was framing——

Kendry caught him and twisted his arm and crashed his jowl against the edge of the door and threw him on his head into the corridor. He locked the door and tumbled breathless into bed. In a world of uncertainty, where philosophy may lead to madness, here was a concrete fact.

He went to sleep without thinking and slept without dreaming; and if for once Mary Eastwood did not hover over him, neither did any other figure. It was true that in his memory there existed the picture of a young woman with amber hair and rich dark eyebrows and eyes in which was all the story of the world. Her glance was vividly out at the observer, as if the lids were about to widen and the lips faintly to

smile in a mixture of doubt and of the upward reflection of a wish from depths unfathomed. The head sat with a fine balance between pride and humility. It seemed to question something of the future.

But the picture was framed and it hung along with the Madonna and the Pyrrhic Dancers in the dark of his other room. He might have asked whether the picture and the idea had been one.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SPRIG OF CEANOTHUS

ETHEL MARR was intent upon the narrower view to the gate at the end of the hedge; but by a turn of her head she could see, through a tangle of honey-suckle and passion vine between the veranda posts, the summit of the mountain through the trees to the north; and to the south, over a surface of tree tops, the bay of San Francisco with its mountains, and a part of the city. The cottage Paulter and her mother had seized, in the emergency they thought they realized, the girl willingly had gone to. It was on the side of a spur of the mountain, hidden by redwoods and by a dense fringe, along the road above, of live oak and scrub oak and ceanothus, interspersed with madroños and bays. The ground fell away steeply to a green cañon depth. The veranda hung out over a lower story brushed by the foliage. A shingled roof curved down over it to the east. The redwoods covered the darkened intervals beneath them with a layer of cast-off branchlets, enduring like the needles of a pine forest and of similar color; through which only tender annuals pushed, whose blossoms looked up from thin stalks to the girl who sat on the coping of the veranda. Ex-

cept for the brilliant roses, climbing to the chimney on the sunnier side, the natural woods and the curve of the roof and the deep green of the coniferæ gave an effect that was Japanese, reflective and calm. The long, gradual spring was at the full; the scent of bay buds mingled with that of the honey-suckle. The air was dry and clean, cool to the skin and warm to the blood. The downward reflection of a setting sun illuminated the girl's hair; her eyes responded to the blue of the evening horizon. They widened at the sound of light feet on the winding path beyond the gate.

"You're dying to know!" said Georgiana. She had no reason to hurry, unless it was an excitement greater than she encountered in Miss Marr. "Of course when I didn't turn up at the ferry last night you thought the worst had come! You must have been a pathetic figure in the waiting-room!"

"I waited," Ethel said, after an instant's pause. "One boat didn't matter. I can see that he's not badly off. Thank you! I'll tell mother you are here."

"But you don't want to hear all about it?" Georgiana sat up, dressed in her blue silk gown and her yellow shoes. "After you took so much trouble to find me? After you waited an hour and three-quarters to hear? I wish you had been there!" she fervently said, through her teeth. "But—I gave you all the credit."

"I hoped you wouldn't find it necessary to speak of

me," Ethel said, with a little fold in her forehead. "It seemed indicated for me to act in some way; but I had only casually to do with it. You've told me all there is to tell." Miss Baine sent up an intelligent smile.

"Have I?" she said. "Some other girl will have to marry him to know him as well as I did in those few minutes—when I foolishly ran back to him, early this morning." She glanced an emphasis. "*I* saw him as he *is!*" Ethel's want of receptiveness became trying to her. "You've already heard from him!" Georgiana shot a finger at her.

"No," the girl said. "I was wondering whether you wished me to think your experience was disagreeable."

"It wouldn't have been agreeable to *you!*" Georgiana said, with her giggle, which was not an expression of merriment. She made an impressive pause. "When they're on their backs; when they're done up, as he was, they don't care for *us!*" she delivered. "Listen: he drove me out of his rooms!"

"What for?" The girl's eyes opened "What had you done?"

"What had *I* done?" Georgiana sat back. "I had been a woman. I had tried to make him comfortable. You'd have thought I was his old maid aunt! My dear, you'd better find it out; when they're themselves, when they don't want you *as* a woman, they don't want you at all! And he *was* himself!" The

girl stared. From a window to which she glanced certain sounds, as if from a kitchen, had ceased.

"I don't know whether I quite follow," Ethel said. "But it's no matter."

"Oh, I shan't go into it deeper, with so many young flowers about?" Georgiana giggled. "I only wanted you to know, considering the impression my cousin has made on you."

"To know what?" the girl said, without Georgiana's facial play. Georgiana gasped; then she allowed an indulgent smile.

"To know, my dear," she said, with opened hands, "that, having treated *me* so abominably he might be capable of treating *you* abominably!"

"That doesn't follow," Ethel brought up. Georgiana again fluctuated.

"A very important thing follows from what you say!" she archly nodded. "It's no use for one woman to try to conceal from another that she's in love with a man!" Ethel forsook her chair for the less confined coping of the veranda.

"If she wishes to conceal it from me," Ethel leaned against the post, "she has only to keep still about him." Georgiana drove off the idea with both hands.

"You don't mean to imply that *I'm* thinking about him!" she said. "Oh, no!" she roundly voiced. "I don't believe in the marriage of cousins; I have heard too much alienist talk in my little time." Miss Marr, straighter against the post, seemed receding from her.

"Of course, it's hard to play the friend in a matter like this; but one owes it to one's conscience to try." Georgiana put herself on grounds for complacency. Ethel refused the generalization.

"If you quite forget my own part in the episode it will be more consistent with my knowing Mr. Kendry so slightly," she said. Georgiana gave a deep sigh; her milky cheeks became overspread with color.

"I'll try to forget it on my way home," she came to her feet. "Your roses are beautiful in the twilight!" She appealed to the faint spots of color against the shingles. Ethel went to pluck a rose for her; Georgiana used the opportunity to run ahead and open the gate. "Of course *you'll* have *his* version of it!" she shortly giggled. Ethel held out the long stem of the rose to her. "No, thanks!" Georgiana said politely. "He wasn't so dreadfully grateful to you, you know."

The girl came back, listening to the retreating steps. When they were gone her shoulders drew a little together. Her mother, waiting in the doorway, mixed her breathing with her words.

"Arthur told you the truth about him," she said; "and that only made you hate Arthur more!" The girl laid gentle hands on her mother's shoulders.

"Why do you still fuss about Mr. Kendry, when I haven't the least intention of ever seeing him, dear mother? Why don't you respect me more?" Violet Marr twisted her hands in her apron.

"You've heard what she thinks of him," she

laughed. "She knows a thing or two." The girl was silent for a moment.

"She's not nice, mother." Violet Marr drew in her nostrils.

"And Arthur, me—anyone who says a word against him, you——" The girl took her hand.

"Don't you see that Mr. Kendry is the first man I have ever met; the first *one* I ever saw who thinks about the things I value? Is it extraordinary that he should interest me?" she richly coaxed. "Because he interests me, just because I admire him, must I be waiting for him to come and—that hideous phrase: 'make' love to me? Now, mother!"

The other nervously laughed and pulled herself away. "You're not going to blarney me! You've done that before; you know I'm weakly influenced by my affections. You don't live our life. Arthur is much more filial to me than you are," she breathed. "You're spending all your money on clothes; you want to look presentable in Mr. Kendry's kind of society. In two years you won't look presentable in any society. Even the way you speak gets farther and farther away from ours. You sit at the table and think how you disagree with us. You're ashamed of us; it's hateful! I won't have you cry!" her voice rose. "You never have cried and you shan't begin now; I won't be influenced by it!" she broke.

The girl drew herself up. "No, I won't cry—not for pain," she said. "But you'd better foresee that

we must find some way out of this. I can't go on living in the same house with Arthur Paulter. We at least had the house on the Hill to ourselves. You must find a solution." Violet Marr burst into tears.

"I know! You have no heart; you mean you'll go away. You're not going to throw yourself on the world; we won't let you."

"There's somebody coming, mother." The girl's voice was uneven. "Please be more quiet!"

A heavily-built Chinaman ambled down the path with a basket on his shoulder. He wore the flapping blue cotton trousers and the blue tunic associated with laundrymen. He sang a cheerful, "How do, Missy Marr!" then with his back turned to them he began laying out the laundry on a settee, in the gloom of the veranda. Her mother withdrew into the house; Ethel strolled up the path and out onto the road. Presently Chan Kow caught up with her.

"I told you Jack Kendry mebbe die, down that hole?" he said.

"It was true," the girl said. "I sent Mr. Paulter. He rescued them."

"Paulter! Ho!" Chan Kow observed. He meditated. "He like go do that?"

"He did it for me," said Ethel.

"Ho!" Chan Kow prolonged it. "How much cost you that?" He turned to her. They were on the top of the ridge. He could not see her face for the gloom made by the gnarled oak branches.

"I made him see that it was his human duty," the girl said. Chan Kow grunted.

"I told you better you go see my Jack—better you sick man care," he tried to express it.

"I couldn't go myself," she said. "I sent some one else. He's not in danger."

"Ho!" Chan Kow had said again, at the first part of her speech. After a few yards he laughed to her:

"Missy Marr, you think now I don't lie?"

"I believe in you now," she promptly said. "You were very fine. You wanted to save your friend. I am glad I know you." Chan Kow gurgled.

"Hah!" he observed. "We like that funny Jack."

"It's a strange coincidence that we both should know him," she said. "I thought I should never hear anything about him again. Have I done something good for him?" she allowed herself, with a little laugh. Chan Kow made a suspense before the small acknowledgment she wanted.

"Much more yet," he mysteriously said. "*Our* Jack——!" Ethel broke a branch of ceanothus that brushed her face. She touched its sweet lilac-like bloom to her lips.

"Much more?" she presently echoed.

"That flower," said Chan Kow, "you give me? Thanks you! S'pose no sun—that plant not make any pretty, any flower?"

"No," she gravely looked to him. Chan Kow stopped at the parting of the roads.

"All same very nishee leddy—all same you. No sun—no flower! That Jack—suppose how he see you, when you hide? You—" he drew it out; "you make a long—plenty long, *think!* Good-by. Much more yet! *Our Jack!*"

She tripped singing down the path and ran into the lamplight where her mother looked up with a tear-stained face.

"Arthur has telephoned. He won't be home to-night," her mother said.

"He'll be home to-morrow night," the girl said comfortably. She ate with an occasional cheerful remark; the mother answered in a monosyllable. Afterward Ethel returned to the veranda and looked through the darkness to the lights of the city.

"He wanted to do something for me," she told herself, "and he couldn't find a way to it. But I've done something for him. He'll be very distinguished some day. It was beautiful to know him."

She sighed and fell to thinking of what the laundryman had said, strange and wise old man. The day after to-morrow was the day Mr. Kendry had asked her to meet him on the mountain. It was the one day when she could be sure, now that he had her letter, that he would not be there.

CHAPTER XIX

A CHANCE TO DRIFT

KENDRY met Mrs. Eastwood at her threshold. "You're badly off," she said at once, inspecting him. "Mary's the last one to soothe you. But perhaps you'd better go in and find that out."

"If you want the truth, I should be happiest bowling along with you." Kendry pointed to her carriage. She smiled and shook her head.

"I shall not snatch you away. You must rescue yourself. If you can calmly get acquainted with Mary——"

"Just my mood," said Kendry. "I feel very old—old enough to sit at her feet and wonder whether I'm good for *her*." Mrs. Eastwood turned with her latch-key.

"You shouldn't be kept waiting for a moment, then," she said. "But it's a pity you're sane only when you're ill, boy! Now, have I been brutally frank?" Kendry pressed her hand.

"You'll always be kind, whatever happens," he said. Her brows went up.

"Hurry, you're weakening!" She left him.

Some lively discussion of a financial matter ceased

at his entrance. The big room had been warmed and beautified by the withdrawal of Mary's casts. Henry lay in an arm-chair, with one foot on a stool. He was pale and lowering, despite the bottle at his side.

"You look as if a smile would crack off a piece of your face," Kendry observed.

"Have you told Miss Marr about it?" said Eastwood.

"She's moved away. I don't know where." Kendry lowered himself into a chair.

"Hal hopes you won't tell her that this has brought on his first attack of gout," Mary said. "I'm sure she wouldn't like gout."

"Gout? This is a cerebral affection." Eastwood contemplated his leg. "My brain slipped down into my foot the night I took your lead, Jack Kendry. Never again!" Kendry felt himself under Mary's measuring eye.

"I think your nurse was a dunce," she said. "She told our man you didn't need more sympathy than you could pay for. You look horrible. Buck up!" She tossed him a cushion.

"You'll split a seam," her brother glanced askance at her. She had appeared to yield to an impulse. The crimson silk of Kendry's other visit had left its glow with her. What she wore made her look rounder, warmer. Kendry's appreciation was less than a thrill. For a moment he was facing her without thought of the future.

"I'm a spook," he apologized, against the cushion.

"And I really think mother and I must take you in charge," Mary nodded. "It's an excellent month for the Mediterranean."

"Venice?" Kendry conversed.

"Really?" Mary brightened. "Have you jumped back and 'scratched them in again?' Venice and a gondola with private liveries, and live happily ever afterward! We can save half our expenses by inviting each other to dinner on alternate nights!" Her brother whistled.

"Rope him!" he said. "You've run him down!"

"You'll calmly recline and remember this 'Idea' as a troubled dream." Mary presided over him. "If you really mean to go I shall lose a night's sleep." Eastwood whistled louder.

"Throw him and brand him!" he said. "Venice—for a live man, an American——"

"Do pronounce the 'r' in your native land!" his sister said.

"Why, I've got a photograph of The Grand Canal—that's an antidote for me!" Eastwood swelled. "Five minutes to get across the street, even after you've caught a sampan!"

"Jack has a soul," his sister explained.

"That may compliment him, but it's no slur on me," said her brother. "The biggest difference in men is women's prejudices about them. I've had Kendry's disease; it merely didn't get all over me. He wants to

invent a new religion, a new system of morals, politics, love-making."

"A new doughnut, with the hole outside," Kendry closed his eyes.

"You take my advice, young feller; life is short and prayer won't preserve eggs. Leave all this trouble at home and make a high dive into an American crowd; you'll come out like a needle from an emery bag; and we'll *all* have a drink!" Mary suffered.

"Your brother was a great loss to the pulpit," Kendry sighed.

"He comes to scoff and stays to bray," Mary said. "I'm sure it's very creditable to you to have thought those altruistic things, or what you like to have them called. It's rather blinded you to my having gone through a phase, too, all this while. I, too, have emerged. Do you guess?" Kendry looked at the Donatello boy.

"You've given up modeling?"

"Bull's-eye!" said Eastwood. "She chased plastic art around the stump till it caught up behind her."

"I'm not ashamed to say that it put me out of sympathy with Jack for a while. I'm glad to be back from the skies," his sister pronounced. "And I'm glad Jack is back from the skies."

"And I'm glad my brain is back from my foot," said Eastwood. "I never thought my little sister with the cold nose would embarrass me by tying ribbons on somebody in my presence. This is worse

than modeling clay diaphragms! Are you going to Venice, so's to be with mother? You look dead, to me!" he hailed Kendry.

"I couldn't honestly look alive," said Kendry. "I'm expiring by devolution. I'm sliding back toward the ape. I suppose our simplest ideas were once vague and fearsome in the mind of the ape. Even the idea of money must have hurt the first monkey that conceived it; he had to hammer it into reality by experiment and patience and a foolish amount of faith. I rather wish he hadn't monkeyed with it. I'm considering whether all that's new and worth while in the mind of man doesn't lie in the region of the vague and hard to grasp,—or whether all that's vague and hard to grasp," he sighed, "isn't a waste of cerebral mud!" he irreverently finished.

Mary clapped her hands. The act jarred a little on his picture of her.

"And that's Jack's confession," she went on with her spontaneity. "And we'll begin all over again!"

She took him home in the electric cab. It was comfortable, and Mary, if she did not stimulate his attention, soothed his spirit.

"Come up as soon as you like; we'll arrange trains and steamers," she nodded. Seen through the window of a cab hers was a perfection of externals; if she was not like an ideal princess she was like an actual one, Kendry reflected, in his mood for realities.

A box had arrived by express. It contained Chan

Kow's card, and a sprig of ceanothus. It suggested that Chan Kow had not left the state; and it suggested the mountain. The latter was the more pleasant suggestion. He had planned to climb the mountain some day soon. He fell to wondering how much psychic connection there had been between the idea and—the eyes. To-morrow was a day when Miss Marr had written that she would not be there. He could lie in that same spot, spiritually even more neutral than when he had awakened in her presence. He could begin all over again, without the psychic element introduced by her.

CHAPTER XX

AN IMPORTANT PROMISE

THERE was the dry, cool air, which even had they been ten years older would have been intoxicating to them. There was the sun just dazzling through drifts of brilliant mist; there was the Bay, glinting with the sunlight and doubling the interrupted azure of the sky. There was all the long story of the distant hills, the brightened verdure, the pointed trees. The birds punctuated it with mites of color and lines of flight and the music of a joyous morning.

The two children had held up their faces to the passing rain. That had no whit lessened the crispness of the air. The two laughed. A foolish custom made it seem necessary to talk. They could have kept silence, looking to the far horizon, side by side, until the silence would have spoken to them.

"If it had rained that first day," Kendry said, "there wouldn't have been a grass fire, and I shouldn't have rushed toward the smoke, and I shouldn't have met you!" She shook the drops from her hair. It was she who leaned against a manzanita, from a rock; Kendry weighed on the cypress bough.

"You'd have saved twice risking your life," Ethel

nodded. She glanced at the approaches, reminiscence shading her.

"And missed you!" he made more emphasis. "Look!" he held her eye: "please as you sit there behave as frankly and openly as I did. Remember my speech about myself—if you can! Then parallel it and tell me all the things about you that I don't know." She yielded gracefully.

"I'm twenty years old. I was born not very far from this mountain. I haven't travelled abroad. I have searched for my 'perspective' in places like this, on this mountain. I, too, am very rich. My capital is my faultless health. And—that's all!" it gave her pleasure to seem to discover. Kendry shook his head.

"Not all!" She had been transformed, to the plain duty of a skillful tailor to tell nothing but the truth. Now the lines of her shoulders kept on through others that were fair to the arch of her foot. "More!" Kendry commanded: "about *your* perspective; have you found it?" She bowed. Her own glance did not stray from his mouth. "Did it come hard?" Kendry admired the lacing of her boots.

"Yes," she studied his forehead. Their conversation did not seem their main preoccupation.

"What was the trouble in your case?" Kendry somewhat absently said. She became more introspective.

"Not knowing people. Not knowing where books left off and people began—or people left off and books

began. If the mountain had been a little smaller I should have grown morbid. I was afraid that I was too imaginary a person, not equal to real living. While you lay here so long I had decided that when you spoke—if you ever did—there were some things you ought to say. When you did say them you frightened me; it seemed too satisfactory. Because, if there was one other person who really thought in the same terms that I did, then I knew there must be a good number more, scattered about. It made the world so much more homelike. Now you know why I treated you with suspicion." Kendry drew a breath scented with the sun's first toll from the weeds.

"When did you cease to treat me with suspicion?" He watched a shred of mist caught in a lonely tree top above a bowlder. Her long pause brought him back to her.

"When I became convinced that you intended to devote your life unchangingly to the idea," she said. It was as if she had struck one clear note on a warning bell. He could not tell if there was accusation in her face.

"But we're getting away from you," he sought to get away from himself. "What is your perspective?" Again her pause gave him anxiety. He had buoyantly ridden above the memory of his lonely hours in his room. Her tone was of certainty, unfevered, unqualified:

"To live as a conscious part of the whole Continu-

ous Performance.' " she quoted him. He stared. She nodded. "I mean—the idea."

His visible hesitancy made her smile. "Shall you be jealous if I say that I had come to the idea in my realm, just as you have come to it in yours?" she looked up to him.

The spontaneous word by which he might have been expected to welcome her to the region of his dearest thought was stopped at the veil of his self-consciousness. If she missed the welcome he saw nothing to show that she had expected it. If she had not expected it she already had divined the turmoil of his doubt about it—from which he had sought escape by fleeing to the mountain.

He saw himself returning to that turmoil as a comet flying toward the sun. He snapped a twig from the cypress.

"How shall you begin?" he quoted her again, to fight the inquiry from himself.

"On the very nearest thing that needs me," she promptly quoted back, with still fingers. She was examining him so mildly but so evidently with her mind rather than with her heart that he felt the indictment completed. She divined and she condemned. It brought their affinity to a parting of the ways. In her only unchangeable devotion to her principle shone; if she had given herself to the idea he never should be able to detach her from it. He tried.

"When you find yourself alone with the idea, against

the grinning world; when you're thrown down and defeated, and when the only wise, sane way seems to be the obvious, easiest way, how can you be sure that you won't break down, and call it youth and idealism, and smile back at it?" he suffered against her look of steadfastness.

He met no reproach across the distance that was widening between them on so bright a day. "Because I've known defeat and loneliness all my life," said Ethel Marr. "With only a little evidence that I'm not quite alone, I can go on." It seemed to leave him lingering at the cross-roads; and she seemed to wish to sweeten their parting. "To have known that the idea came to one who did smile back on it would be almost enough," she said. "One must not be sentimental."

"Why do you patently feel that I *am* smiling back at it!" Kendry burst from his reserve. Her eyes widened in a way that carried him back through all his knowledge of her.

"One can't help seeing that without something like the idea, or else without wanting to grow richer, this part of the world isn't a happy hunting ground. All your friends either accept the spirit of the place, or they go," she said.

"But I hadn't announced it; I hadn't decided it. I'm here!"

"And you shouldn't be," she went clearly on. "That it has occurred to you to go is reason enough."

And you'll regain your color and your strength; and you'll find it much more agreeable living abroad and wondering whether you ought not to be here than living here and wondering whether you wouldn't be better off abroad." Convent walls seemed to be hedging her detachment in. Kendry hammered at them.

"You mean that if I've doubted the idea I'm a doubter in the blood; and that I'm not worthy of it, and of the mountain, and of communion with you. That's a little more than I deserve!" The sun gave her no frown, shining in her face.

"Couldn't you throw my comfort into the balance and make that the small deciding weight?" she leaned forward. "You have the world; I have only the mountain. Couldn't you consider leaving me the mountain—to crown our little history here?" He flushed with the petulance that reproved him while he spoke.

"The idea isn't a deity, a thing to be scolded by—that's the advantage! One invented it for one's self, out of one's self. If I did go away I shouldn't leave something frowning behind me—I shouldn't deserve your contempt!" he finished, feeling the contrary.

The idea looked at him out of her deep blue eyes. The white mist had huddled away to the horizon. The song of the mating birds proved the stillness of the miles. In such a setting moments could not but seem precious.

"There couldn't possibly be anything harsh about

it," she gently answered. "It's only our views that are meeting each other," she left the rest for him to fill.

"But I do find it harsh. I've fallen from your esteem. I might go to Venice or I might go to Timbuctoo! It's because you can't know all the situation with me——"

"It isn't hard to guess," she seemed not to invite his confidence.

"But you're taking too much for granted," he pronounced. "Because my judgment hesitates it means that I stand still, not that I move in the direction you'd think less of me for taking. It's Mary Eastwood; I've admired her—long—much; you saw that. But with the idea she finds me eccentric, amusing; and without it she invites me to Venice, with her mother. If I doubt the idea I equally doubt going to Venice. You are judging me——"

"For doubting?" she smiled. She rose. It was as if she never could be angry with him. "You must not imagine that I've been trying to convert you back to your self," she said.

"You don't see that I'm not bound to Mary Eastwood—that I haven't decided to forsake the idea?" he tried to hold her. She turned to him with her first coldness, moving off.

"One who doubts both had best forsake both," she said.

She went to where she could see the slopes over

which the trail ascended from the village at the base of the mountain.

"It's my bad balance between speculation and instinct," he presently came up to her, speaking more quietly. "If I should get the true balance I still might become presentable in your eyes." It did not seem to pierce her close intentness on the slopes beyond. He followed in her steps.

She was not happy, he told himself, with satisfaction. She had not justified herself, and she still was an object for generous sympathy. She condemned him and it was wrong of her. The end was not yet; if the mountain had not sustained his spirits it had brought up his will. He would push on till he emerged with a triumphant solution and until she bowed to that with some humility, when he would raise her high with the show of his respect. But she was hard to convince, she was suspicious, she was obstinate—his words went emptily ahead against her yielding figure, her gracefulness, the gathering helplessness not wholly concealed in her face. Thought—words—they had taken possession of him, ringing hollow within, he told himself. An end to all logical processes and splitting the shades of meaning! His heart should rule him, primitively, despotically, recklessly—till he blundered through to her good will.

The girl listened to his steps behind her. He doubted—everything! she inwardly shrugged. It was the way of his sex, the way of inconstancy, the way of

which old women told tales to younger ones. He had tramped on her sacred ground, spreading his doubt, demanding attention for himself alone—when for him the world lay open, with no one to ask the why or whither of his going. She asked only that he should go,—except that their parting should be pretty and strike once more that first note. It must be, if she could make it so; he must remember her kindly. She must and she could dwell on his being good. Perhaps there never would be any one else so good. And he clumsily had tried to be good to her.

To the mountain they were two people of the same youth, the same aspiration, the same warmth, and will to live. To its long view the shades of their difference counted only as the shadow of their affinity. The mountain waited in its ancient calm, for weal or for woe.

She brought up with her head in a ceanothus, scanning the near distance. Kendry looked over her shoulder.

“Good—oh, good!” he exulted. “Let him come!”

“No, no!” the girl paled. “He’s capable of killing you; you must leave me here!”

Kendry stood in the trail. “I want to see Mr. Paulter,” he said. She touched his sleeve.

“Can’t you go, and let me have my mountain?” she looked up to him. “Would you drive me away from my home—my mother?” He smiled, liking her touch.

"You won't have to go, Miss Marr," he said. "I was overwrought from that nasty experience underground. I hope you'll forget it. It's all very clear; I'll arrange matters with *him*." She nervously laughed.

"I shall not submit to that," she whispered. "You must go down this other trail, like a good boy. If you don't it will spoil the mountain forever for me. Haven't we enjoyed it too much for you to end like that?" she coaxed.

"It isn't the end," said Kendry. "He won't hurt you; no one would. He wants to talk to me."

She caught a glimpse of Paulter winding rapidly into the fold beyond them. "Be reasonable," she said. "*I don't think you fear him—*"

"Neither does he," said Kendry; "but he thinks I won't play the game; he thinks I'm rude——"

"Don't play the game!" her voice trembled warmly up. "He carries a pistol! Go, and perhaps come back—to the idea, to the mountain. I'll let you have it all to yourself!"

"Not even for you," said John Kendry's son.

She kept murmuring things. The man rounded the last curve; his face was gray and they heard his breathing. She beat down Kendry's arm.

"He's going away; he's going to Venice," she kept saying into Paulter's eyes. His lips were always moving, but she did not hear. The gravel ground beneath all their feet.

"She's coming to meet me again," Kendry's voice was more distinct than theirs.

"It isn't true," she cried. There was a half-healed scar across Paulter's face. He was seeking to loosen her hold on his collar; but she felt no pain—only the voice of Kendry:

"She'll come to that cliff where the lone tree is——"

"It isn't true!" she cried.

"She'll come at dawn—to see the sunrise—three days from now! If you shoot me then, you won't hang for it. Now let her be, you beast!"

Kendry was moving down the other trail.

"I shall not come!" she cried. He knew she would not come; but Paulter would come and the rising sun should be their witness. Paulter would come suspiciously expecting to thwart them. The sight as the turn of the trail again gave him a glimpse of them brought his heart to his throat. She had been patting the man's cheek, calling his name as if he had been a dog she feared. Now Paulter's arm was about her.

"She'll come!" Kendry pointed at them. Paulter laughed. He stood pressing her to his bosom. The girl sobbed and Paulter laughed across her shoulder. Kendry stumbled over the stones, the veins standing on his forehead, his tongue fallen into the vocabulary of the West. The man had taken her in his arms—the thought swelled within him at each step. It stayed with him when he reached the lowest altitude. It followed him to his rooms; it threatened to upset what

little conscious arrangement there was left as to what he valued, what he wanted. The obsession sharply broke when he reflected that, viewed with calm, it was rather greater than an even chance that he had but three more days to live.

CHAPTER XXI

A NEW MARY

KENDRY expected to arrive first on the ground and there, with his back against the dawn, to command a halt of Paulter's subsequent approach; on which the two would begin to shoot and would continue till one of them was dead.

Three months previous Kendry would have called such a programme brutal, hideous, uncivilized, unnecessary. He would have looked upon it as vain, melodramatic, pitiful. Paulter primitively demanded that Kendry should relinquish his communion with a young woman—it was of separate importance that she was Ethel Marr. For an alternative there was Paulter's insistent menace against her peace and against Kendry's life. Upon these premises Kendry would have said that the duty of a civilized man was to appeal to the law. The rights Paulter assailed were Kendry's by law. To halt upon the question of what his enemy thought of his courage Kendry would have called harking back to a decayed and ridiculous "chivalry."

But now that he impulsively had brought the issue to where it was, Kendry supported the impulse with his reason. What were the exact measures the law would

take? Provided he could convince a magistrate that Paulter's intentions were homicidal, the magistrate would place Paulter under bonds to keep the peace. Paulter's desire to reach Ethel Marr, across the gulf to him invisible, that in all dimensions divided him from her, then must be porportioned against a sum of money, extorted from him after the whole story that had begun on the mountain had been recited in the court to be magnified and elaborated in an irresponsible press. Kendry believed that Paulter would disregard the bond with that same turn of lip which he paid to all else that opposed him. Kendry believed it because he could not imagine money weighing against an obsession of the meanest heart. The law required a sickening publicity: in exchange it could give no certainty. The law marched behind the event. In the highest civilization there would be nothing to prevent one man's summoning death as the arbiter of his quarrel with another man. If it was humiliating for Kendry to set himself against one so ignoble as Paulter, in a contest where indiscriminating chance should decide the issue, it still had become the sweeter alternative. To this conclusion instinct and reason moved together.

It brought him to a cooler, clearer state of mind. The two worse possibilities seemed to balance. On the one hand was to die, which was disagreeable; but to die a man; on the other hand was to live, which was desirable, but to suffer the extinction of his self-

respect. To turn and flee was inconceivable; hence to go ahead, perhaps to the elimination of Paulter, but in any case to a solution, to a finality, was the logical index; and the logical index was all he asked.

There hovered over him immediately the inevitable cloud on human processes. It carried that memory of Ethel Marr being drawn in odious closeness to Arthur Paulter at the irresponsible moment of her reaction from her fears. It meant that if Kendry died, if he himself escaped an unbearable imposition, he left her prey to it without his sympathy, his aid. The thought weighed in the balance against his stoicism: it threatened to bring him to the trial as a suppliant, asking for poetic justice. He summoned more stoicism, he imagined her filling his dead silence with her own stoicism. There were preparations he must make. He strove to preoccupy his mind with them.

There was to make his will and there was to scan the ledger of his other personal relations. He wrote cheerfully to his sister, impressing himself upon each one of her family in the way he would like to be remembered, yet giving no hint of what the cable might startle them with, two days hence. He must now be as methodical and exact in his more intimate affairs as he knew how to be in the conduct of his fortune. There was, shameful to his days of selfish introspection, that piece of paper he had taken from the breast of the sailor in those fading moments under ground. By now the sailor and the Pole might be

dead and buried without identification. In the least event, their peril partly had been due to him and there was reparation due them. It was Monday: he telephoned his agent and commanded a report on both men before two o'clock on Tuesday. From that hour till nightfall he would devote himself to their cases. Prior to that time he would occupy himself with his will, and from this nothing should divert him. Thursday was the appointed dawn. He wanted Wednesday for himself alone.

It had been his thought, to the extent of his few millions, to leave his money as a force at some new point, demonstrating a new desideratum, a new possibility in the evolution of society. The thought was vague, susceptible to ridicule, liable to men's unconcern, just as the idea at first had been vague, just as every fresh thought may be when first half plucked from the dimness above men's infinite grasp. He had not precipitated it out of that vagueness. He took up his pen. There were institutions of learning, essaying to advance leading the strong; most of the great movements of history had risen from levels intellectually lower and emotionally deeper, to be labeled and preserved in dessication by those institutions. There were institutions of mercy, which followed the human procession restoring the weak and the wounded to the long straggling rear, fighting the phenomena of elimination, by which, rightly or wrongly, society moved toward its unknown goal. In the other categories

he found nothing that appealed to his aim. The commonplace rich man could be trusted to endow them all.

At midnight he tore up his bescribbled page. He was keeping account of his nervous forces. Sleep was their coefficient. He gently put Ethel Marr from his mind; the best he could do for her was to maintain his strength, his steadiness.

Two o'clock on Tuesday found him no nearer inspiration. Deprived of his own guidance, the money seemed capable of building itself into a monster of ineffectualness, against which the only remedy would be its whole dispersion. The report concerning the sailor lay on his table; that about the Pole was to be expected. Kendry started to dress. Eastwood came in.

"I must be out of here in four minutes, but the place is yours," Kendry said. He assembled the bottle, the siphon, the arm-chair and cushions necessary to Eastwood and his limp. Eastwood had greeted him with an expectancy, which he followed by an hesitation.

"You haven't read the papers this morning," he finally said. "Then when do you—the next day? Well, the lode of the Little Dog mine has jumped off the claim. It busts Mab—complete. What do you think of that?"

"It will be forty-eight hours before I can begin to digest it!" Kendry was frowning over his collar but-

ton. Eastwood fixed on him and began to stroke his double chin.

"Perhaps there's no reason why you should digest it," he said, with a touch of coolness. "But there's a reason for my wanting to give you the straight facts."

"Hand 'em out!" Kendry acquiesced. He seized his waistcoat. Eastwood swallowed his glass at a gulp and put it down with the mark of inquiry. Then he flushed; then he sighed. He tapped his boot with his stick.

"She came home to get individual possession of her share of the estate. She would have the mine. I told her what everybody knows about mines. But she wouldn't touch the real estate; the idea of a mortgage or two simply scared off her reason. And she would have the mine. It had taken a spurt and I didn't count the spurt in the valuations we made. It increased forty per cent in the clean up, for two weeks; then the lode jumped into the next company's claim. She has left to her just that one unimproved piece backing yours on Mission Street," he paused, with an indefinite note of inquiry. Kendry was filling his pockets.

"What is the moral effect of this going to be on Mary?" he seemed to have found something to say. Eastwood's head turned to him with a suddenness.

"I don't guess she's got 'round to the moral effect," he feelingly said. "*She's* camping on the financial

effect! The moral effect on me, if you want to know, has been merry hell! It's rung every bell in *her* chimes. *I* use the backstairs. But I'm not going to spread out on that: every woman keeps an angelic side for somebody, if he's nimble enough to chase the spot where it shines." He threw a jealous glance at Kendry's preparations. "I suppose it occurs to you that I'm going to do something for her?"

"I should hope so!" Kendry raised his brows, seeking his hat. He waited, ready to depart. Eastwood regarded him to a length that was interrogative, but he failed to penetrate the other's mind.

"Well, how much?" he voiced his dissatisfaction. "Why should the whole ton of bricks fall on me? The old man left my mother enough to live on quietly. He had a sneaking idea she'd marry again—I guess everybody knows that story. He left the rest to Mab and me. I've been saving up most of my income against a rainy day, and a family. Mab has shown me what it costs to keep a woman contented. She's been spending from sixteen to twenty thousand a year, keeping up that 'salon' in Paris; and I saw some people there that looked as if they would take five if they couldn't borrow five hundred. Mother has three thousand a year; and that is just what I've been allowing myself for my own expenses; and it's enough for Mab, as a single woman; and that's just what I'm going to give her!" he challenged with visible effort. Kendry held his watch in hand.

"If you want my judgment, she can get along on that," he stared. Eastwood could not fathom him.

"She'll make a better married woman for the experience," he seemed to begin to think aloud. "She'll come down and perch where she can be petted. Lord, how she does want to be petted, just about now! A couple of soft-boiled words—" he appeared to break the thread of his thoughts. "Old chap, don't let me keep you from more important matters. I'll finish my glass; you go on." Kendry nodded.

"I'll see Mary at the first opportunity," he started away. Eastwood stopped him with a rap of his stick on the table. He nervously suppressed a smile at space.

"At the first opportunity?" Kendry waited patiently. "Well, she's down in the reception room, waiting for me, of course," he drawled. It brought Kendry to a standstill.

"I'll take her with me," he announced. But his rapid steps in a moment returned along the corridor. "When did she get this news?" he inscrutably said, holding the door. Eastwood took a long breath.

"O, you've seen her since. It was after you left her, that day you got me into that hole in Chinatown. She hadn't been going to say anything about it; but they put that stuff in the paper. How long shall you be?" There appeared to be a definite purpose in Kendry's mind.

"I'll return here in just one hour and twenty minutes," he stated. Eastwood allowed himself an agreeable assumption.

"You talk like a business man!" his tone might have been taken to insinuate more. "On with the dance; I'll wait!"

He waited, though he had received no answering gleam. Kendry wasn't very plump, he said to himself, comparing Kendry with his own amplitude; it was the result of an overworked conscience, or something. Kendry walked the world generally with a twinkle about his eyes, enough to denote good nature, but not enough to denote what Eastwood called good fellowship. You couldn't tell what Jack Kendry would do, he reflected, any more than you could have told what his father would do, even if it had been worth thousands to you. Still it took all kinds of men to fit out the girls with something to love. Eastwood settled himself to see if he could get an image of Ethel Marr in a glass of brandy, and to wonder how she had so managed to climb up and pull the ladder after her.

Mary came forward with a sad little meaning toss of the head. When she turned to look for a chair his hand restrained hers.

"Henry has told me the news," he said. "Will you drive with me? It will give me a chance to see you. There's something you can suggest my doing, perhaps, for a woman in misfortune—something you'd like to look back to." She was moving off with him

mechanically, while he spoke. She was unobtrusively proving, to the attracted eyes in the lobby, the imperturbability of a spirit whose pride was essential. Kendry had never seen her so richly, so almost noticeably dressed. Her glitter caught the attention of the people on the street and became for him something consciously to seem to ignore. It pointed to him, though not keenly against his major preoccupation, the change that had stolen over her since those first Paris days. It added to the incongruousness of their driving across into the less desirable residence quarter of the town. Her glance took in the cheap shops, the smoky tenements.

"If it's money, I'll give her some," she rather feebly said; "but I've quite run out of sympathy. When I'm in a mean street I get into a mean mood. And I've already been preparing myself to pick out a mean room on a mean steamer. I suppose the sooner we go, the better. What have you decided?"

She seemed to have lost substance; her voice lacked volume.

"You won't have a chance to give money," Kendry said. "But your sympathy will flow spontaneously, if you get this woman to talk. I wonder if you wouldn't be happier staying in California, at home in the big house?"

"That's just the sort of a thing I didn't expect from you," she frowned. "It sounds too much like Hal. Please don't count up my jewelry and tell me

what I could get for it! It isn't the money; it's the loss of one's even standing with one's friends. I'm sensitive on that. If you're not most careful I shall suspect a change even in you." The words seemed to fall against an austere semi-detachment on his part. Her look flattened to the long straight lines of dirty drab and yellow houses, of barren brief garden spaces, of false roof-fronts and dingy panes.

"I can't see what money has to do with our joint history," Kendry presently answered her. So right and so empty, she might have told him. Well-fed, insolent children of the republic were hanging on triumphantly behind the open carriage: he ought to have foreseen that, he ought to have chosen a closed one. They bounced through muddy holes and skidded along car tracks in and out among the trucks which contributed to the *débris* between the curbs.

"I don't see why you brought me here," she sighed. "Is it a prophecy in extension of what I'm coming to?" To her it was as if with stale habituation he had expected her remark.

"Because otherwise I shouldn't have the chance to see you to-day," he was kind. "Besides, you already see how fortunate you still are," he waved at the monotony that depressed her. "You'll get a new sense of proportion when you hear this woman's story. The man was going to marry her; but he's lost his grip. She's willing; but the sailor thinks he ought not to. Try to melt the poor creature," he coaxed.

Her faint responsive air lingered while his eyes were on her. They had come into the region of the most saloons, of the most second-hand furniture and clothing shops where, by the merciful adaptiveness of human nature, the deepest indifference endured as to color, form or permanency. They ascended straight, narrow steps, above a locksmith's, into a smell of cabbage. They waited mutely under curious eyes that peeped through the crack of double doors. The crowded upholstery fought the blue wallpaper, appealing to a precarious stand whereon a violet and orange bowl held pink paper flowers. The fat woman, without a collar beneath her frowsy head, brought down to them a woman of forty, thin and worn. Kendry disappeared whence she had come. Mary heard him gruffly greeted by the sailor. She sat gingerly on the sofa that mocked the shade of her gown. Mrs Spiller was neatly mended and buttoned. She had pricked fingers and hollow eyes; she induced melancholy, taking note of Mary's clothes. It was a pleasant day, they agreed, looking to the hideous roofs refracted by the window glass. The woman's mind seemed undetachable from the sound of masculine voices in the room above. Yes, she got good wages. Yes, she gave herself enough to eat; she didn't know why she shouldn't; some people ate too much; her eyes met Mary's for one instant. Her husband had died five years ago, and her only child had gone in the same year. Her face hardened. There was a long pause. The creature was inhuman,

Mary flushed; and the carpet hadn't been swept. They were startled by the sailor's voice hysterically calling: "Mary!" The woman blanched; they came to their feet.

"He doesn't mean me?" Mary Eastwood stared.

"No!" the woman scorned, running to the stairs. Kendry met her half way up, his hand raised to reassure her. For Mary the sight of him was a refuge to be sighed over. He was joyously benign, smiling down to Mrs. Spiller; the walls, the carpet, the cabbage diminished to his supporting background. He was beautiful, Mary angered at her humbleness.

"Go up to him!" he laughed to Mrs. Spiller. Mary moved as to depart.

"Wait!" Kendry mischievously whispered. They were to see Mrs. Spiller returning in tears, blindly feeling for the balusters. It was painful to Mary: the woman had no handkerchief; she mixed her inarticulate sobs, her blessings on Kendry, with the back of her hand across her face. She hadn't dreamt of anything like this. They never would forget Mr. Kendry. "She—she"—Kendry patted her on the shoulder and bade her to return to that man above, who would be on his feet in another twenty-four hours. Now the public carriage seemed luxurious; they could escape out of that doleful region.

"Have you given them a fortune?" Mary said. "That place was so smelly!"

"They didn't need a fortune. He had lost his

nerve: it was just what I have come out of, only worse. I gave him a job, and there's a house with it, and he's going to marry her to-morrow. Love and a cottage, you see, squares everything."

"Ah, I grant you!" she said. He seemed to linger long over the pleasure his visit had given him. They crossed the dividing street and came into a broad avenue that took on some grace as they progressed. She could not see why he should gaze with such sentimental abstraction at the houses to her so familiar and ugly, and forward to those blue hilltops across the Gate. "Then this is the resurrection of the idea," she finally said. "And your wavering was only loss of nerve. And you'll stay here. And it seems to you that the idea and I can never be reconciled."

"This was hardly the idea in operation: it was making amends." They turned into her street. "As to plans, I have none—beyond the day after to-morrow," he said. "I have a rather important engagement with another man, then; and I'm afraid it distracts me. You are not happy, are you, Mary?" he softened, seeking her eyes. She kept them up to him till she had made a moment different from any that had gone before.

"You are begging the question about the idea," she presently said. He twinkled.

"And if I should go back to it—full blast?" he asked. Her mind worked keenly.

"It will prove that you were right and that I was

too scornful," she quietly turned away, looking into the faces of two friends she passed without recognizing. It was the unsaying of her old attitude, the end of her condescension. Something of her mystery evanesced with it. He felt the difference in their years: suddenly it was left an isolated fact by her earnest of harmony in their minds.

"My own concerns aren't worth talking about," he more compassionately said. "I shall be thinking of yours."

The driver cast a glance behind him. Kendry went on to say that wealth was merely relative and that the body politic eventually would undertake to regulate its ownership. She half listened while he enlarged upon that. She was preparing the scene for their tea: not in that great cold room to which her own coldness so often had contributed, but on the balcony upstairs, under an awning warmed by the afternoon sun and screened by plants. It was small and there were many cushions and Hal and her mother would not be there.

His present impersonal note was suited to the ears of the person on the box. This she could, by a word, a glance, cause to strike as she should wish it to. Kendry went ahead and rang the bell for her. When the door opened he held out his hand.

"You're coming in!" she commanded.

"I absolutely must be at my rooms in five minutes," he sorrowfully showed his watch. "I'm moving on

a schedule that I can't alter. Your brother is waiting for me."

"Telephone him," she said; "he's unimportant."

"That's what he'll think," Kendry laughed. "I shall have to tell him that I must run off again, at once." He pressed her fingers; they were limp. "I shall be more human after Thursday—if I'm alive, with this rush!" he responded to her unspoken charge. It was not enough. She was taking it for granted that there never would be more, never enough.

"Good-by," she dully said. The dullness remained, hardly yet enlivened by its coming glimmer of cynicism, while he ran down and took his seat in the carriage. It was in her poise, not so erect. Her clothes seemed to deride her. His present delinquency accused him as he waved adieu. He hurried his driver down the hill.

"Poor, dear Mary!" he murmured. "But—not till after Thursday."

CHAPTER XXII

A SIMILAR EXCURSION

EASTWOOD appeared to have risen at the sound of his steps. He sought Kendry's eye, noting his breathing, his color, his cheerful greeting. Kendry pounced on his agent's yellow envelope.

"Well?" Eastwood finally said.

"Do pardon my rush," Kendry looked up. "I dropped your sister at her house," he added. Eastwood studied him.

"You dropped her at our house?" he presently voiced.

"Yes; you don't mind my reading this a moment?" Kendry said. The letter rustled in the silence.

"You dropped *her*?" Eastwood repeated.

"At your house," Kendry genially half turned to him. "Sit down." Eastwood slowly buttoned his coat.

"I guess I'll mosey along about my own particular damned business," he addressed the door. "Something more on your table." Kendry picked up the card of Miss Marr. "I thought I heard something begin to drop," Eastwood went on without turning; "but I guess I'm a little too deaf in one ear. So long!"

Kendry restrained a disposition to snap his fingers at the closed door. If a growing understanding of her brother added to a knowledge of the thorns in Mary's new dependent situation, that was not a matter for one who, till Thursday morning, must look upon himself as dead. On Ethel's card she had written: "I will wait." She had come to try to dissuade him from meeting Paulter; it was natural; nothing else could have brought her to call on him. He must go down to her in the reception room. There was the Pole, for whom the yellow envelope accounted; there was a will to write, and there was his day of lonely preparation on the Mountain.

He stopped on the soft carpet in the corridor. Ethel was within the curtains, looking out of the window, doubtless in the expectation of seeing him return. It was not the familiar blue serge, the straw hat; there was an effect of line, of richness, of not wanting attention but of being proof against it, that carried him back to his first days with Mary. Only the lines were softer, firmer, the poise more pliant: the uninvited, the inevitable contrast to Kendry of greater strength, sounder health, plus youth. It touched his generosity, his compassion for Mary, his rebellion against forces in themselves so heartlessly material. The girl felt his presence; he saw her coming to him without preliminaries, her eyes supporting the appeal that palpably stood upon her lips. He would be kind, he would be appreciative; but he would be firm and he must

contrive to make it short. From some unseen source there darted between them Georgiana Baine.

"Oh, here we *all* are!" she cried with fine surprise. "I did want to see you both," she began.

"And we both want to see you," Kendry forced her watchfulness back to himself. "You didn't leave me your address. You're to inspect a family of orphans with us, at once!" he led them down the stairs. "Probably Miss Marr will need your professional knowledge. It's that Polish tailor: he had already lived too long in a cellar. He has left a widow and five children."

If Ethel was proof against the surprise in his statement her mildness, her acquiescence did not go to the length of applauding his dissimulation. Georgiana cast sidewise glances at her in the carriage. Georgiana was willing to bet that she had ridden in one twenty times as often as Ethel Marr; and her protest at the girl's ease added something to the pink spaces on her creamy cheeks. Georgiana's skirt hung stiffly out over her yellow shoes; her hat stood up on the back of her head as if aloof from a worldly wickedness she could not help knowing of by hearsay. They were polite, but she felt out of company. But she guessed she could hold her own.

"I hope it's quite clear to you," Kendry said to Ethel. "You are to determine what ought to be done for these people. Georgiana," he strained it a little, "is to give us her hygienic advice. I am to furnish the funds. We act entirely under your orders"

—Georgiana missed his eye—"and you have *carte blanche* absolute."

"Even if it's the Polish tailor's family on Union Street?" Ethel said, noticing their direction. "I've long known them by sight. You won't think I'm doing too much for them—you've counted on my recklessness?"

"I pay," he bowed. He saw her imagination warming.

"There's the oldest girl," she said; "you must notice her." Then with a breath, "I've dreamt of such an opportunity, but I've never had one." The two others felt themselves dwarfed to her beside the importance of the event. "You've still a chance to make reservations." But he had the huge satisfaction of answering only with the muscles about his eyes. Georgiana was saying something about soap.

Except for one who could look with Ethel's memories to the top of the adjacent hill, the Latin Quarter vibrated with more cheerfulness than that plane Kendry had visited with Mary Eastwood. There were wider spaces, bits of triangularity, and a remoteness from the greater manufacturies. In the language of the shop signs, in the goods displayed, the dressing of the women, the voices, still lingered unassimilated bits of Mexico, of Spain, and of Italy and France. The population was less dense, more prosperous: roughly it represented the wine of the country as against the whiskey and the beer. That perhaps had attracted

Pinewsky to his cellar apartment, to which, after some feet of corridor, the entrance was by winding cement steps. In the corridor there was a trail of leaves and petals by which they could have found their way. Ethel stopped.

"It will be the idea," she said. "It will be the oldest girl. But the others—one's heart can't turn away?"

"It was on account of one's heart that one was begged to come here," Kendry said, repaid by her flush. Eagerly she led the way.

She stopped on the bottom step, with only the light from the cellar illuminating her. A girl of twelve looked up from a battered book. The far ceiling stretched from a meager skylight at the rear to a transom obscurely on the level of the sidewalk. The child sat with her feet on the rung of her rawhide chair. Her skin was olive; she had deep brown eyes and much hair; but her features were not yet beautiful. The brightly aureoled vision under the arch above the step stood fixed on the child while she arose on her patch of carpet and laid her book on the high table, flattened at her place. This was not the kind of visitor that ever had entered here before.

"My father has been buried this morning," she explained, with a foreign turn to her "r's" and "s's." "We are not——"

"I know," the vision said. "It is very clean here; but you are soon to live in a better place." The utter-

ance was more resonant, more liquid than had come down those cold steps from any thin American throat the child remembered.

"My mother has been taken to the hospital," her own voice was encouraged to match the lady's. "Three of them are gone to the convent. He and I are keeping the house," she pointed to a screen. There were bolts of cloth piled at the end of the table; the wall behind her hung with patched and pressed old clothes. "He is asleep, now"—the lady's eyes brought forth the child's confidence. "He cried a long time. He says he is not strong. It is because he is lame."

"And when he wakes," the lady spoke, "he'll hear news: that you are to leave here; that you are to go to school." The child's eyes opened.

"You said——?"

"You are to go to school; you are not to sew at night and hurt your eyes; you are not to worry about the cost of what you eat; you are to think only of growing big and strong."

The child's lips parted. The room was growing so big, herself so small. Her hand made a little movement forward as if inclined to test the reality of this vision. The dimmer figure of Georgiana seemed actual enough; and when Ethel began her approach the quality of the child's face dawned on Kendry's wonder. The smile, if it started at the young lips, called up every further vibrant faculty of countenance, of limbs, of torso.

"What orchestration—what a temperament!" he murmured, heedless of Georgiana's weight upon his shoulder.

"You used once to pass here. You have spoken to me when I did not understand English," the child cried. "You—you say I am going to the school?" the words frightened her.

"There is some one who—even if he should die," the lady's voice strangely put it, "will see that you are educated and given a chance to develop all the power you have. Do you like that?" The orchestra suddenly stilled. She turned to the screen.

"I—I couldn't leave *him*," she shook her head. "He is lame."

"We shall see about that," the lady said. "Your brother shall go to school, too; and there will be many books; and a fireplace, and beds upstairs, and the sun through the window in the morning. It will be in the country."

The child tried to bring back the smile against her fluctuating color. But her mind galloped to the finish. She shook her head.

"There is my mother—and three children. She—she is always very pale. I could not go. But—but—" she gasped, pointing to the screen, "he is so clever! I have a temper: sometimes I am bad, because the houses make me feel like prisons!" her eyes glistened, her small chest heaved. "But he," she whispered, "he is always good." All the elements of her smile

reassembled in the voice of prayer: "*Would* you take him? He is lame."

"Listen!" the lady held the child's head: "all six of you shall go, to a house among trees. And there shall be a dog, and there shall be a cow; it shall come true very soon. Do you believe me?"

The child touched the lady's hands: they were warm, soft, real. A real horse and cart clattered by beyond the slit of light at the sidewalk.

"Oh—Oh!" her face lit up, her thought spread forth through all her fiber. "He—he," then, diminishing, "must I tell him, yet?"

"Why not?" But the child appealed anxiously to the screen.

"If you—if you went away," she managed to say, "if you did not come again, it would make him never happy!" she held back tears. She was lifted to the table. They both faced Kendry. The eyes of Ethel Marr attacked him across that cold space.

"Ask this gentleman, for me, for you, with all your might, if he won't come to see you, early—very early!—*Thursday* morning: like a good gentleman, like a sane gentleman, so that we all shall be happy!" His glance was not forbidding, but the child could not speak. He was thinking how Ethel Marr had magnified since that first day on the mountain, as if the sun had shone upon an opening blossom.

"If I don't come, little girl, someone else shall; and everything this lady says shall be true, upon my

word of honor." The child started, from the intensity within the encircling arm.

"We never asked you for anything before: we may never beg of you anything again, but we do beseech you to come on Thursday—early!" Kendry shook his head.

"I can't alter my engagement. Do we look honest?" he came to the child. She nodded from conviction. "Tell me something else you'd like to have," he avoided Ethel's eye. The child thought. Her short skirt had been tailored from some man's abandoned coat.

"Will there be a piano?" she trembled.

"O, not only a piano, but some one to teach you to play it." She laughed and gave him all her confidence.

"It is for him. I will sing in grand opera; he will play for my learning; and to be my manager," she laughed, with the prophecy ringing true in the laughter.

When the colossal beings moved out of the room they left the child warming the largest gold coin of the realm in her moistening palm.

"You might have said so beautifully you'd come," Ethel was saying. But she did not wait for his answer. "Will you go to the country with them; will you look out for them?" she said to Georgiana.

"Lord, no!" Georgiana breathed. "It's stupid enough in town, for me. Besides, I couldn't get on

with that girl: she's like a theater!" Kendry looked at his watch.

"You'd like to be driven to the ferry?" he asked them. Ethel unhappily sought his eye.

"Heavens, if you two want to drive there together, don't fuss about me!" Georgiana's giggle ascended. It caused Ethel to push her toward the carriage step. Kendry said he must return to his rooms by the quicker electric car. The girl leaned out to him, mutely beseeching; forgetting Georgiana, perhaps forgetting herself. But he moved away.

He had withstood her. It seemed impossible, it seemed brutal; but it was true. He was not a live man; not yet—perhaps not ever. If she was magnificent: if Mary Eastwood, thinly diaphanous in the light that shone from Ethel Marr, was by so much more entitled to his generosity, his stepping to her rescue—they belonged together in one category. It would not do to think. Thinking might make him fatally yearn to live.

CHAPTER XXIII

KENDRY'S WILL

TOWARD eleven that evening the messenger who brought him a letter from Mary Eastwood would not wait for an answer. Kendry did not break the seal. The letter could contain nothing he should be able to answer prior to Thursday. But though he had a vision of its being found on his body and read by vulgar eyes, he could not add it to the heap of smoldering papers in his fireplace. He put it in his pocket. If it contained a feminine negation of her attitude in the afternoon, according to what she considered that to have been, then her attitude at their next meeting might be another negation, canceling the first. From another source there had been a communication :

"DEAR JACK: My life depends on you. I hope you will come direct to my room at not later than eleven to-night.

MARIE DE FONTENOY."

To which he had shrugged and tossed it into the flames. But he would go. Except for the provisions covering the future of the sailor and the Polish family, his will had made no progress. He had dressed for the mountain. He took up his light marching kit.

He would not return to his rooms. As soon as circumstances permitted he would cross the bay and disappear into the wilderness until the appointed hour.

Marie de Fontenoy peeped at him through the narrowest slit of the door before she stood behind it for his entrance. She wore a gown of purple brocade, with ornaments in the fashions of the seventies. Her false front stood memorially on her forehead; there were little bristles on her chin; her figure was of a corpulence drowning femininity. She locked the door, thrust a lighted cigar into her mouth, extended her hands with a cordiality that in China would have been considered immodest and hysterical.

"The perfumery is stronger than the cigar," Kendry said. "Of course, if you *will* be a joke, I can smile. You're a sort of walking pun on yourself. But I like to take my friends seriously."

"*Alors*," said Chan Kow, "seriously take me to where I shall not be coughing in a hangman's noose. They accuse me of those dollars, of that dead monkey you found on my floor. I am 'wanted.' But I am innocent; therefore I must sublime. Will you whisk me into Marin County, in a horseless wagon?"

"I will," said Kendry. "I will consider the morality of the act after it is performed. But an automobile, at this hour——"

"Awaits!" Chan Kow lightly sang. "I took the liberty of ordering it in your name." He locked a portmanteau; he made no subtraction from the elab-

orate array of articles on his bureau; a drawer carelessly open was full of ribbons and laces. He touched a match to the alcohol beneath a pair of silver curling tongs. He jammed on a leather cap and tied a double veil over his face, hiding his eyes and his diamond earrings. The table was arranged with French newspapers and novels, and an open box of chocolates. He gave the portmanteau into Kendry's hand. "*Mon cavalier!*" he explained.

"This is my last appearance in any such rôle as this, *ma belle Marie*." Kendry hid his discomfort. "Sabbee?"

"We meet again in Paris," Chan Kow nodded, "at the opera, as gentlemen: I, perhaps, with a dash of rouge on my cheek."

They left the room lighted, a needless fire in the grate, the alcohol burning under the tongs. A fat pug dog lay asleep at the foot of the bed, as unalert as if Chan Kow had drugged it. The great lady took Kendry's arm along the arcaded corridor, her bulk explaining her tottering gait on high heels, her jingle of gold bracelets, her pervading musk, her glint of rings at the end of her silk mitts excusing to the hotel world her want of comeliness. On the ground floor they avoided the open area where the lounging spaces were. They came out by a side entrance. The man who had brought the automobile saluted Kendry with recognition; other than him there were no interested spectators to so commonplace a departure from that large

hostelry. They flew towards the ferry, the ugly details of the wide street lost in darkness, deepened by rows of inadequate gas lamps and the glare of the headlights from the cable cars; the buildings softened against the sky of a mild night in the grateful surcease of the day's commotion. Chan Kow had settled himself in the rear seat, an appropriately characterless figure. Kendry did not speak until they had locked wheels on the deck at the stern of the ferry-boat and were safely in the stream. Chan Kow did not respond. With the colored lights of the waterfront gleaming behind him and the illuminated outlines of the hill where, like a Buddhist tocsin echoing among Christian spires, he had spent so many profitable, sensual, dangerous years, Chan Kow was ingenuously snoring.

Kendry paced beneath the stars. The dark summits of all the mountains held in his thoughts. Dying would bring removal of all these boundaries, with such infinite diffusion of spirit over space as to make further consciousness seem improbable. But his revery was not melancholy; he had asked for something to do and destiny had confronted him with Thursday morning. In the face of dissolution all values altered. He believed himself content. He guided the car in the wake of the last passengers off the boat. In fifteen seconds they were out of sight of it. He went at thirty miles around broad curves into the deserted country road.

"I beg you to teach me the control of this monster," Chan Kow said, a few miles farther. He was exchanging his pointed slippers for a pair of boots. "Seeing me carried like this, as on a noisome cloud, would curl up the spirits of my ancestors! I shall ask to drop you in some convenient place; then I shall continue alone, till the 'devil' underneath us throws me into the ditch, which I understand is the inevitable end of enjoying this pleasure, as with many others. I hand you here a check on my Paris bank, to pay the owners."

He conservatively maneuvered under Kendry's direction, a determined, but not so apt a pupil as one might have expected.

"Now I will nap again till you have passed San Rafael," he yielded the wheel. "I have promised myself to deliver your friend Collins, including his great ears, to the sheriff of Marin County before sunrise. I hope he is sleeping as soundly as this motion invites me to!"

They echoed through the streets of sleeping San Rafael, and presently ran steeply down into a region between the foothills of the sea-ridges and the long spread of marshes bordering the upper waters of the bay. The hills rose suddenly out of the flats, sleekly rounded in their folds, covered with grass, but mainly with no other vegetation than a rare clump of eucalyptus or an indigenous oak at some chance height, black and domed in the night. In the middle of a straight

stretch of road Chan Kow pressed Kendry's shoulder.

"Let us halt and smoke."

"And discuss the effect of my being called into court, and telling all I know about this," Kendry said. He shut off his spark. The stars and the two red points of their cigars stood out together. The other human sign intermittently was that of a shifting engine beyond the hills. "Did you murder that old man?" Kendry said. Chan Kow's interior seemed to have filled with smoke, awaiting this question. He cocked his feet on his portmanteau.

"Ting Lee went into the jewelry business with my capital," he said. "He always honestly paid me half of his profits. They became large. Paulter bought bullion, and secretly shipped it to them from the East; Ting Lee manufactured a little jewelry, and that ex-convict, Kelly-Collins, made many beautiful silver coins. I long suspected it; Paulter knew it. Paulter wanted to increase his returns; he debased some of the silver: you remember their quarrel. It was I who settled that, by sending back his bonds. But, because you had come to see me, Ting Lee and Paulter and Collins unceasingly suspected that I was under pressure to betray them. The man shot in the theater was one of my household they had made a spy of. The fatal strategem of Ting Lee, following that, showed the decay of a once fertile brain. He presented me with a bottle of liquor he greatly praised. He insisted on opening it for me; so that I brought him a circular

tray with two glasses. He was too gracious—he even went so far as to say that the liquor was to celebrate the end of our first misunderstanding. For me it was then only to divert him with pretexts until the opportunity arrived for me to shift the tray. I drank, and he suspected me until I began to show signs of suffering. Then he drank, and my suffering suddenly ceased, and we looked into each other's eyes, with his beginning to enlarge. While he writhed on the floor I composed a poem which it is a pity I cannot translate into French or English. Then I thought of the inopportuneness of that death—it's proving to the others that I knew what to expect from them. I did not wait for your visit; I could not seek you, for you had gone with Collins—I learned where! I took the first boat across the bay the next morning, and had the honor of bringing home the laundry to Miss Marr. It was a pleasure to confirm one's opinion of so perfect a product of humanity. I said what caused her to persuade Paulter to go and release you from that death. Had I gone myself probably I never should have ridden in the *Champs Elysée*. My cigar is out."

"I hope," said Kendry, "that I now am saving your neck. Do you realize what it must have cost her pride to appeal to that man for me?"

"I believe I know what pain it would have cost her not to succeed," Chan Kow said. "But you still live, and a mighty force beats within her breast—equal to all your powers of mind and body and soul—the

marvel of the world! To which may your wisdom lead your appreciation."

"What an extraordinary composition you are, sir!" Kendry sighed. "Why do you now risk your liberty, perhaps your life, pursuing Collins? With your stand-points what have you to gain beyond the petty vengeance of jailing this man?" Chan Kow exhaled at the North Star.

"Collins will be dreaming in one of those cañons," he said. "The moon will be shining through the holes in his window-shade. The cabin is off the road in dense brush and oaks. Collins will awake to a falsetto scream, a falling body against his door. He will have been a week without seeing a mortal. After a long silence he will open the door. On the step—petticoats!—the age obscured by the folds, the beauty of the female hidden by a veil. If he does not shoot, he will stoop down to that veil. And I will bind him like a pig, and leave him at the sheriff's door, with the circular of the Treasury Department pinned on his breast, showing his likeness and his history——"

"Alive?"

"You are thinking what an uproar he will make, shouting my name while I am guiding this devil-go around the corner? But he will not have seen my face; he will have only felt my needle pumping through his skin, and the morphine will make him warm and happy, like that fat dog we left on the bed." He sighed comfortably and stretched his legs. "As you

say, however, there is no satisfaction in all that, for mere enmity's sake—if it succeeds. But to me, now, a new experience is worth the risk of one's life. I have tasted poverty and wealth, slavery and domination, love and disillusionment, debauchery and asceticism, friendship and homicide, philosophy-to-optimism, and philosophy-to-despair. For you, *mon brave*, and for that lovely coppery hair and morning eyes, it was left to show me what she calls your idea. If, as I think, you have inverted it, that is because you were born in the Western Hemisphere, upside down. For you the idea is to build up the beautiful; for me it is to destroy the hideous. In either case it is a dedication of one's more lasting self to the Great Whole, asking no return but the satisfaction of one's spiritual intellect. It is a new religion without a god—happy thought! For no one can ever take its name in vain, or weakly shift responsibility on it, or suffer with fear of it, or seem to compromise with it by saying words. Exit Collins from a bettered world, or exit Chan Kow. I see signs of the moon. Have I said enough?" The steely-blue reflection from the zenith was deepening shadows on his great countenance framed in the veil. The man was at least seventy, Kendry looked at his hard flesh.

"You are stupendous!" Kendry sighed. "If I could understand why you flee, being innocent, I should be at peace with you." Chan Kow made no answer. When they were ready to start he said:

"Should you like to ride to your wedding in an automobile constructed in Chinatown?"

"I should probably ride to a broken neck!" Kendry said, in English. "You Chinese are no mechanics."

"But long before Byzantium we were administering courts of law." Chan Kow smoked. "Hence I, a Chinaman, prefer not to ride in your mechanical car of justice."

They skirted the northeasterly end of the slopes that came down from the flanking summits next the mountain. The moon ascending silhouetting the line of eminences on the San Pablo shore, silvering the winding waterways of the marshes. They scuttled like some fiery incongruous insect with a hundred hasty legs. At length Chan Kow stopped him.

"Presently there is a cross-road and a house. Shall we part here, you for your road to the mountain?"

"Why do you assume that I'm bound there?" Kendry said.

"From which of the two ladies have I a letter, begging me to dissuade you from this affair with Paulter?"

"It might be from either, if both knew," Kendry somewhat shortly said.

"Both do. I informed Miss Eastwood: it was but fair. But I have destroyed the letter. Do not suspect that I shall interfere. I shall be zig-zagging toward Paris, possibly infected with this mad motor-car disease." He put on a belt with a holster, and covered

himself with an opera cloak. "If you kill Paulter, I trust to Nature and the curve of that willow waist! If he kills you—*mon Dieu*, you have been young, well fed—and let us rejoice that your death will simplify the life of her who carries the torch of perfection." He alighted in his grotesque garb, which he seemed to have forgotten. "The greatest fact for me is that your father was my friend, that I am yours, and that perhaps you will become mine." He offered his hand. "To-night: sleep! That is the secret. When you meet Paulter, let *him* talk. Your eye, not on his eye—that is the romance, the theater. Your eye on the lower button of his waistcoat, your breathing full as may be—six shots and save one! A bad toothache is worse than the pain of giving up the ghost. No stimulants! Learn how much your pull deflects your aim."

"I am your friend." Kendry gripped him, spare and straight against the broad, round shouldered figure. "If I live, test me!" The old man's eyes glowed with approval, with understanding, with fidelity.

"The idea will test us both," he said. "The idea came out of your learning the uses of wealth, its formula. When you have learnt the uses of love, and have learned its formula, when you are as rich in love as now you are in money, then that little surplus aspiration that remains will grow and strengthen for the service of the idea. *Adieu!* If any man's god will make witness to me I will worship that god in your

favor!" He jerked forward and disappeared over a rise in the road, his veil blowing behind him, his ability to guide the machine at such a pace a matter for conjecture. Kendry turned off to the by-road toward the mountain.

Mary's note, then, had been to dissuade him. It justified his not opening it. At last he was alone, with nothing before him until Thursday at dawn. A day and two nights would evolve the matter of his will. At present he watched the long shadows of the eucalypti bordering the way, letting his mind restfully wander. Wandering, however, it sought no new fields; presently it gravitated to an ancient theme. There with unhampered activity it fastened upon a contrast of amber hair and chestnut, then on twenty other contrasts, less of chance and more of essence. But his will presided. He found a new balance—it was just, it was comprehensive, it was liberating. His fortune should be divided equally between Mary Eastwood and Ethel Marr, each to administer according to her light. Surely now he could sleep.

He climbed a steep hillside, and came under the spreading gnarled branches of an oak that swept the ground. It was dark in the shadows. Its outlook, through the leaves, was only to other hillsides, other oaks and the stars beyond. He lay with his hands behind his head. The air was soft, dry, still. The solitude, the vacancy, were part of his mind. What he in the embodied spirit might have done for Mary

Eastwood, for Ethel Marr, not even they could have foretold. What the money could restore to Mary, what it could hold forth for Ethel Marr he foresaw. The solution was so exact; so auspicious, so poetic that it seemed to make superfluous the day before the dawn of Thursday. It was *the* solution. It made John Kendry superfluous too. It was the beginning of a loneliness.

CHAPTER XXIV

ETHEL'S PLAN

At the gate Ethel listened for sounds from Paulter. Apparently he was not about the house. There was a maturer shadow at her mouth. She glanced to her window and to the fence of wire and charred lath that divided the small garden from refuge beyond. The lamp on the set dinner-table in the living room limned her mother at the doorway, in her gray gown and in her shawl. The girl approached her with a bunch of violets.

"I ate on the boat: I was late, and I wanted to be away from Georgiana Baine," she said to the relaxed face that would not look at her and would not respond. Her mother moved onto the veranda, drew up her shawl. The city was a distant glimmer. "I went to see Mr. Kendry," Ethel continued behind her, less with the freshness of her greeting. "I have promised to care for some orphans for him. I shall be busy. Where is Arthur?"

"He just went out," her mother colorlessly said. The girl let the violets fall to her side. She made her way to her room. Some time elapsed before she returned in slippers and in a calico gown, her sleeves rolled up. She began clearing the table, changing the

cloth, leaving the violets in a vase. Her mother's thin fingers gripped the door posts.

"You didn't tell *me* you were going there; you didn't go to see him about orphans!" The girl drew up as if to the lash upon wounded shoulders.

"Mother, you know why I went. Arthur isn't concealing anything from you. I hoped I could stop them. I didn't succeed." The hands left the door posts to clasp each other.

"It will be Arthur—I know it will be Arthur!" her mother moaned. "Why did you go to that man—why didn't you come to *him*? If you would say one word to Arthur—" The girl straightened her arms.

"Why haven't you said that word?" she approached her. "Why do you call on me when it is I who ought to look to you? I am your daughter: why have you let this man pursue me into our own house, when I loathe him and when he has brought us to this unbearable pass? Mother, why do you stand away from me so?"

A half smile, as if from the sweet taste of self, mixed with the bitterness of her mother's tone. "You'll try to lay it on me," she said. "You won't say the word that would keep him away from that man. You want him to be killed!"

"Ah, what possible word can I say to him?" her daughter deepened.

"You could show him some condescension, some gratitude for all the things he has done for us——"

"Things against my will, against my begging him?"

"Then things he has done for me." Violet Marr took her opportunity. "*He* sometimes thinks of *me*! I have some value in his eyes: every day I have less and less in yours. He's much more like my son than you are like my daughter!" she pressed the thin hair from her temples. The girl drew in her breath.

"Would you say that if you realized that it might be true?" she uttered, with awe. "If *you* feel that way, do you dream of its wretchedness for me? Mother—" She tried to compel the mouth that flickered between aggrievement and the pleasure it took in the effect it had produced. The girl stood suspecting herself of a vitality, of a heart, opposed to one who sought to fasten on them; to fasten on them with feeble tendrils that pleading for mercy's sake not to be torn, mercilessly planned an aggregate that should crush her power to expand. The echo of their words horrified her. "Mother, I haven't been forgetting you to-day. You saw the violets; you turned away from me when I came with them. I think Mr. Kendry is going to marry Miss Eastwood. Nothing but my sense of being responsible for Arthur's hatred of him would have made me call there. Won't you give me your eyes, mother?" The gray gown passed in front of her; the once shapely hand took to smoothing a tiny wrinkle in the cloth.

"What did he say?"

"Georgiana Baine was there. But I said what he quite understood. He has taken too many affronts from Arthur: they've gone down too deep in him; he merely said that he would not break his engagement for Thursday morning." The fingers drew up the cloth.

"He *means* to kill him!" her mother said between her teeth. Ethel stood behind her; the lamp shone through her mother's thin nostrils; the room took on a foreignness, a hostility. Her mind went back to the reception room where she so long had waited.

"Or else to *be* killed," she corrected. The pale blue eyes shot at her.

"I've seen him; *he* doesn't mean to be killed; he's planned it all out. He's not hot-blooded, like Arthur; he's calculating, like his father; he's cold, like your father, like you. Suppose Arthur does kill him?" she was inspired. "It will be for lack of one touch, one endearment, from you!" The girl stared with widened eyes.

"Do you mean, mother, that you would have me marry him?" she said. Violet Marr again turned from her.

"If he *thought* you were going to, he'd stay away from the mountain; he'd do anything! Even without your actually saying you would." She heard her words and flushed. The girl did not respond. Once after the heat of an angry passage between them the girl had told herself that there had been a degree of

maturity beyond which her mother's mind never had passed. Now the truth of it was weighing on her. Violet Marr smoothed the cloth. "I couldn't stand the scandal, the publicity of it," she began to moan. "I'm not like you." Her daughter was motionless. The tick of the clock became exasperating. "I know I shall never live through this—I know I shall die—up there alone." She began to sob. Ethel followed and put an arm about her.

"Mother," her changed voice came close to the older woman's ear, "you must tell Arthur that he can't live here any more. We haven't time to discuss it. He must understand that he is to leave our house, and that you and I are going to another part of the world: that he will never see us again—that it is needless for him to continue his quarrel with Mr. Kendry. Will you do the only thing that may save them both—the only thing that ever can make us happy together?" Her mother's shoulders worked to be free; the girl shuddered, but withheld her. "Don't you see how you and I can come together again, in our own little home, away from him? I shall work; I shall be able to have you a servant. We can read; we'll go to the theater; we'll drive sometimes—you know you love those things. Mother, say you will—now, to-night!" Her mother laid a finger on her open lips.

"He's coming!" she panted. The girl clung to her with both arms.

"You can say yes or no, mother!" She stifled a sob.

She kissed the cheek as she had kissed it in the midnight terrors of young childhood. "I'll give you all my love, mother. Tell him! Say yes!" There were steps on the veranda. Violet Marr extricated herself.

"He'll hear you," she whispered. The girl stood away from her. The light betrayed their agitation. Paulter examined them.

"What's up, mother?" he said. They were silent. Ethel did not acknowledge his presence. The new shadow deepened about her mouth. "What's up in our happy boarding-house?" his jocularly mixed with a touch of sarcasm. Ethel took the lamp.

"I'll tell you presently," she said, ignoring her mother's protest. She left them in semi-darkness, while she appeared to be trimming all the other lamps beyond the half-closed kitchen door. Paulter whistled, and ascended to change his clothes. When he brought down his own lamp to her she was washing the dishes, in her rubber gloves. Paulter stretched himself on the lounge, in his carpet slippers. His hair was oiled and pasted down over the top of the abrasion from Kendry's door. He waited, ready to wink reassurance to Mrs. Marr; but she would not meet him, and the work in the kitchen drew out.

"This don't phase *me*," he undertoned; then he whistled and pretended to read a newspaper. He wanted to know what new thing had happened, but he could get on without saying so. They need not think

he had been moping that day. He had been at the races; he had lunched with two affable ladies, and his bets had paid for the lunch. If the ladies were not her kind, their responsiveness made up for it, and he knew what they were and they knew what he was, and they knew just how far any woman or any man could go with him. Violet Marr did not approve of the races, and he never expatiated on them to her. She disliked tobacco smoke, and he could point to a good many times when he had deferred to her in that. Now, however, he was about to see if there was a cigar left in his case, when Ethel reappeared. She tried to breathe as usual. She took strong hold of the back of a chair.

"I was begging my mother to ask you to live somewhere else," she said. "You came back before she could answer me." Paulter did not meet her forced gaze. He put his hands in his pocket and fixed on her mother.

"Well, Ma, why don't you answer?" he said. They gave her time; she painfully blinked at the floor.

"I shall take no answer to mean no, mother," Ethel said. Paulter chuckled.

"I guess if she wanted me to go she would find a way to let me feel it. Maybe she'll find out that you spent the afternoon with him, and tried to make somebody else take a job in the country so that *she'd* be out of the way! It's about time there was some man will-

ing to look after you; and it ain't every man that will do it and take his pay in hard words." She did not flinch.

"You've been down to see Georgiana Baine."

"Yes," he rose to the challenge. "And if you knew as much as she does about looking out for yourself she wouldn't have been able to blab. Oh, I size her up, don't worry!"

"Mother answers no," Ethel resumed, able to free herself from the chair. "She hasn't the courage to ask you to go. Now I ask you to go. There is a hotel near the station. Will you go to-night?" He angrily felt his color change. "You are coming between me and my mother; you make me live under a cloud of self-consciousness; I'm like a plant in a cellar here. I want you to go. Will you oblige me?" The sofa was low, and Ethel was tall, but his wish to show no perturbation kept him from altering her advantage. He pointed his finger.

"Say, who paid for those clothes you wore to-day?" he hoarsely said. "The money came in a letter from 'Mooseer de Paryless'—something! And who is he? He never saw Tahiti, and I can prove it. He's a Chinaman and his name is Chan Kow, and he wouldn't throw you money for nothing, would he? Who would? Why, his bosom friend, Jack Kendry; he paid for your clothes. And you went up to him to-day as much as to say: 'Well, here I am, in 'em; and what next?' That's all. If she wants to chuck

me out of her house, she can." He had missed his mark.

"Mr. Kendry isn't the kind of man who does that sort of thing," Ethel said.

"Oh, that amount wouldn't be a gnat-bite to him!" Paulter sniffed.

"You miss the essence." Her quiet cut him. "He wouldn't put me under such an obligation, against my knowledge, my wish. That would be more like you. Will you go, now?" she gained in presence. Paulter tossed to the end of the sofa.

"Will I go," he said, "just so you can steal up there and be with him on Thursday morning and spoil the game? Say," he lowered, "I'm going to fill that guy so full of lead that he won't float on ice! If you don't want to marry him, why are you so pale?" Her hands came back to the chair.

"Then you refuse to go?" she ominously said. Her mother cried out as if in pain.

"I asked you to coax him!" she said. "And you say everything you can to make him want to go to that man and be shot. You sha'n't drive him out of the house at midnight!"

"Then, mother, I shall go myself," Ethel drowned her. "I shall never live with you until you are done with him! Good-by!" She was bareheaded, her slippers were thin; her throat was exposed. She started for the door. Her mother gasped her name. Paulter was before her.

"You stay here!" he said, with the key of the locked door in his hand. He hurried to the door of the kitchen, his eyes upon her. She had made no effort to pass him; she might have seemed to less excited eyes more closely watching her effect on him than planning for herself. Paulter locked the windows; they could not be opened noiselessly. "You sit down and stay a while," he said. "Your mother says I don't pet you up enough. Well, I've said all the cold words I wanted to say. Now I'll be pleasant, whether you are or not." The girl, least agitated of the three, went to her mother.

"He's committing a crime," she stated. "I'm of age, and no one has a right to deprive me of my liberty. I shall find a way to go. Do you realize the situation?" Her mother burst into tears.

"It's horrible," she made her way to the stairs. "Neither of you think of me. I won't stay to hear you quarrel—I can't stand it!" She was without her lamp, but they heard her shut her door. It, too, the girl thought, was being locked against her. That drew on her. Paulter laughed.

"Now, say," he whispered, "I know as well as you when a hen hatches a duck! If you knew how much I was on your side, you old handsome—" It brought her to remember how rarely her mother had left her entirely alone with him. She sought the piano. "Sure—whoop her up!" he praised the move, his eyes on the full softness of her throat. He threw himself into the armchair and searched for his cigar-case. It was

empty, and while her fingers ran over the keys he glanced at the stairs. She began playing snatches from his whistling repertory of popular airs, mocking them with the grandeur of her accompaniment.

"I've just burned up all the tobacco in the house," she collectedly said. "I'll send you the equivalent when I have left here. I was looking forward to this, and I didn't want you to be filling the house with smoke all night."

"Oh, it's all night!" he cheerfully said. "You think I've got to smoke to live. Just watch me."

He feasted his eyes. It didn't need any Georgiana Baine or any coffee to keep him awake to-night, he chuckled, putting together the detached items of Georgiana's half confidences about Kendry. Not to smoke made him sleepy as a rule; but the man who couldn't sit to any length of time before that swaying waist, that tumbled hair, that clear, browned skin of neck and arm—his name wasn't Paulter. His imagination, unsoothed by its habitual narcotic, warmed with the sight of her and with the advancing of the hour. Her mother's tread was no longer heard.

"This is like married life," he laughed. She leaned from the keys and tossed her head at him and smiled—actually smiled, he repeated to himself.

"Love in a cottage," she said, her hair a little more disordered, her knee rising with the pedal. Her eye, while for lack of knowing the words, she hummed the vapid sentimental song of the moment, seemed to

linger where she best could be aware of him. And the look about it was almost wicked. By God, the man silently slapped himself, women were strange beings! She broke into an air he was certain she never had heard sung on the stage: its invitation, its suggestion, if it had come to her, must have come through the music. He came to his feet.

"Say, you could just tie me up with a string and dangle me on your finger, if you wanted to," he emphasized, his knee against the piano stool. The girl jumped up and took the lamp.

"The oil's out," she laughed. He was ahead of her with the key to the kitchen. He gallantly took the lamp from her hand.

"The prima donna don't fill any lamps in this show!" he said. He opened the door to the rear veranda, where the oil can was. The girl strolled back to the living room. The can was empty. He heard her leisurely ascend the stairs. There was no more oil to be found. He heard Ethel lock herself into her room.

It made him dash around to beneath her window. She was just lighting her lamp.

"Going to bed?" he said.

"I shall stay here till you've fallen asleep for lack of tobacco." She closed the window and drew the shade. His disillusionment was as if she had thrown cold water down on him. He gave a hard laugh.

"Will I?" he said.

He hurried back to the kitchen. The lamp showed that there was no other oil can hidden there. He could hear her walking about in her room. There was no oil in any other lamp. There was no candle and no matches, save what he had in his pocket. He risked the ascent to his room—he could hear if she opened her window. There was neither tobacco nor lamp. If he slept, she was going to steal out—she must think he was easy! He would stay awake till Thursday morning, if necessary, and then she couldn't beat him up that steep trail. He chuckled his scorn.

He went alertly back to the kitchen. She had forgotten the oil-stove—there was enough fuel in it to boil a little water. Coffee, of course! He searched the cupboards by its light. There was no coffee and there was no tea. All right. There was an Arthur Paulter. She'd have a chance to get acquainted with him.

He couldn't remember a shred of tobacco in any pocket; he couldn't recall where he had abandoned a half-smoked cigar. He came out on the gravel walk again. Her light burned. He was accustomed to late hours, and she wasn't, he reflected. She would read, and that would make her eyes heavy. There was just one more thing he wanted to know. He stole back. He once had given her a pistol, the year when the pistol had come back to dispute the field with the revolver. It was his first and only gift. It had rather pleased her, but it had frightened her mother. In the new house they had agreed that it should remain un-

touched in a cupboard of its own. It was gone. All right—he wasn't going to climb up a ladder to her window, and have her say she had thought he was a burglar! He would settle himself for a test of endurance, and she should not have the satisfaction of hearing from him.

The moon was rising. It made the shadows of the living room gloomy to one whose eye must not close. He placed a table across the foot of the stairs and piled it high with books in unstable equilibrium. He put on his overcoat, and brought out a stool to the veranda. Even if he were foolish enough to risk running down to the village after cigars the stores would be closed and deserted. On the stool, without a back, if he went to sleep he would fall, and that would awaken him.

But for some hours he had no further tendency toward sleep. He was not used to solitude, to self-contemplation; they made him melancholy, they brought a kind of fear. She was up there, and he was out in the moral cold. He wasn't making good with her. He could have been at the Golden Bow-Wow in town, with a fat cigar in his teeth and a drink at hand, some one trying for all she was worth to make good with him. Instead he sat here with not even the old hen poking her head out to commiserate him. Here he was, going up against a man that would land him in a mahogany overcoat if he wasn't quick enough—and what was A. Paulter going to get out

of that, either way? Say, had the two of them planned this out together? Was Kendry off in the woods somewhere? He put his pistol in his overcoat pocket. Let him come! He began pacing up and down the veranda, stopping at the sound of a night-bird, a prowling dog. There was wearily no sign from above. Her light shone mysteriously on her white curtain.

CHAPTER XXV

THE VEILED LADY

THEY listened. The moonlight was a narrow strip between thick redwoods, through which the road from the level of the marsh had become a winding lane.

"Now what's a bloomin' motor doin' up 'ere, this time o' night?" the other man whispered. "'Old on!" he commanded, when Collins nervously turned. "*You* know 'ow to run a car!"

"They ain't been a pair of wheels up here all this week," Collins said. "You say *you're* wanted. That automobile is about how a sheriff's posse sounds to me. I'm—" The other caught him by a thin arm.

"No, you ain't, you little pair o' wings!" he blew an alcoholic breath across one of Collins' great ears. "Don't talk like a bloomin' fife. Now, Gawd knows what your name is, Mr. Collins, but mine's Pink. That's my real name, arsk Scotland Yard. I've just remembered it. And I never 'ave walked when I could ride. They're keepin' an 'emp necktie for me, but your 'andsome little nut they only want to shave. Whereby, it's me that are the 'eadpiece of this lovely pair o' twins," he held his arm around Collins' neck. "So you just 'eave alongside." Collins laughed.

"I see you're accustomed to having your own way, Mr. Pink," he said, with a sigh of surrender. He ducked from Pink's arm and became invisible in the gloom of the redwoods.

Pink contemplated the black shades and heard the footfalls cease at a safe distance.

"You know what you remind me?" he called. "You remind me of an 'at pin and two palm-leaf fans. You aren't a man; you're an insecck."

The automobile had maintained its heavy "chug" in and out of the ravines. Pink jammed his cap over his eyes. He softly stepped behind a thick bush. As the automobile ascended around the curve and a solitary figure showed in it, Pink jumped alongside.

"'Ands up—'igh with 'em!" he said, over two pistols.

Almost at once the solitary figure uttered a small scream. The car stopped, its vitals whirring in the exact state of a frightened woman's heart. Two gloved hands sought to shut away the sight of the pistols. A voice from a heaving bosom whimpered:

"O, dear——!"

Mr. Pink peered nearer, over the sights. His shoulders began to shake. He appealed to the darkness.

"It's a fee-myle—" he exploded. "Come back 'ere, you little skelington, do you want to cawmper-mise my reputytion?" The lady was examining him through her fingers. Pink turned the pistols to her.

"Did you say the gentleman was walkin' on be'ind, mum?" he narrowly asked. The lady drew back and despairingly shook her head beneath her veil.

"O, dear!" she squeaked.

"O, yes, mum," Pink enthusiastically pocketed his pistols, "that's what the lydies usually calls me." Again he turned. "Do you 'ear, you shiverin' little bacteria? Come out o' your 'ole. Now, mum, we'll back 'er 'round easy," he deferentially pushed the car. The lady helped by a turn of the wheel. Collins appeared, his pistol preceding. "Nothin' to fear, mum, only a loose wood-nymph." Pink casually tossed his head. "Now, mum, me an' you in the back seat." The lady alighted heavily on the side away from him, her veil and cloak obscuring all but the fact of her immensity. She pulled herself up with an obese groan. "Hexcellent, mum," said Pink, "and makin' up in bulk any trifle of beauty you've mislaid. Climb up, kebbly," he gave Collins a dig in the ribs. Collins seemed to be wanting in humor.

"Let her walk," he said. "It won't hurt her. Take my advice." Pink whistled.

"Did you 'ear 'im, mum—the blasted hinterloper! I wouldn't mind cuttin' 'is ears off, mum, if the wind wasn't be'ind us." The car was fitted with a collapsible hood which he found he could raise and throw so that its quarter circle went forward of the rear seat and shut Collins from view. "Now, you," he called over it, from tiptoes, "drive on to you-know-where,

or I'm just as hapt to come and 'urt your feelin's, you bloomin' houtsider."

They began to roll down the hill. The lady, retired to a corner, appeared to be soaking up the tears with her veil.

"What—rain?" Pink leaned toward her. "I say, this is hagitatin'. My word, mum, I can't stand it. Arsk me anything—arsk me for myself, mum, an' you shall 'ave it. 'O, stow them crystal drops'—as the poet 'as it."

So it happened, by the charm of his silver tongue and from a yearning for a communion that for several years had been denied to him by stern authority, Mr. Pink brought the lady's great arm to pass around his neck and fondle his elbow, while his own right arm went about a hard waist that was slim only when compared to the stuffed bosom above it. The lady's free hand caressed his bristly jowl and she murmured in self-deprecation a single "O, dear!" Mr. Pink would have liked to roll on the ground, to express his sense of the situation. "You're a rippin' old couple of tons," he tittered. Presently he wanted to scratch his nose.

It took him a moment to realize that his arms had passed out of his control. The lady's weight against the seat was immovable. Her gloved hand entered his mouth and held his jaw as if it had been a wolf's. Pink tried to lower his head and to bite, hoping to squirm to the floor. A turn of his wrist, reckless of

the anatomy of his elbow, brought from him an impotent groan.

"What's the matter?" Collins' voice complained.

"O, dear!" the lady squeaked, with like impatience. They had reached the level of the marsh. Collins had made acquaintance with the car. He turned northward and let out speed. Pink sat with his eyes fastened on the veil. The face behind it was making a long inspection of him, with Pink's elbow uncomfortable enough to remind him of what excruciation might follow his stirring. He limply awaited his opportunity, but the slow shake of that hidden head was too chilling to his heart. He kicked and snorted in a wild effort to be heard; the car roared at top speed, and the lady added a confusing scream.

"O, cut it out," Collins called. Under his breath he cursed the half-drunken fool for carrying with them a witness to their flight. Pink had received a blow with the side of the hand, in the fashion of a saber cut, at the top of his nose. It blinded him while he sought his pistols. He was thrust over the back of the seat and his hands beat about in the flying dust down into which he could not keep himself from sliding. They clutched at the passing ground; it cut out his palms. The dust was solidly filling his lungs and he could not double himself because his face brought up against the slippery overhanging body of the car. Three miles away was a blur of lights from a creek-boat coming down toward the bay. Pink cried out to it with all his

might from a bloody mouth. Chan Kow lowered the ankles and let the head bounce once on the ground.

The head bounced once on the white streak in the moonlight and was hauled up a few inches. Chan Kow took a restful breath, his knees braced against the seat-back, his fingers sunk in the flesh above the ankle bones. His muscular sensations carried him back to the man-power boat on the Canton River. It was a far cry from then and there to this reckless motor car which made the hilltops dance and dissolve. What a wonderful variety human existence was capable of, he mused, staring at the head and shoulders that writhed and took on the color of the dust. But Western civilization, from his thirty years' experience of it, was a failure. It was, he held, like this person Pink, irretrievably upside down. It began at the wrong end. John Kendry's idea, in which there still was the fatal taint of Christianity, was to upbuild the beautiful, rather than to destroy the hideous: witness the vague ethical reluctance with which Kendry approached the business of destroying such a man as Paulter! Chan Kow leaned over and let the face scrape along the road; probably the first twenty feet had eliminated the features, if one could see through the dust. The figure of his thus making a grindstone of the earth pleased his fancy, though he saw no way to complete the figure in bringing in the name of the late Mr. Pink. There was less convulsion in the *tendo Achilles*; the toes no longer worked. Western civili-

zation undeniably had accomplished great things; but, owing to its intrinsic error, it would evanesce; whereas the Orient already was stirring from its long and refreshing slumber. He let go one ankle and held the other with both hands, varying the effect. In the short spaces of comparative smoothness the thing dragged like a stone on a string. For a moment he saw it receding behind, where it had rolled and unfolded and lay motionless. A turn in the road hid it. He could not help recalling those lines he had written while the poisoned Ting Lee had pounded about the floor on his heels and the back of his head. He threw away Pink's empty shoe and sat down to mop the copious perspiration from his forehead. Some day, he breathed, old age would come creeping into his thews. He readjusted the veil. He pulled back the hood and collapsed it. Collins' speed was too dangerous, and it was in the wrong direction. He calculated the thickness of Collins' skull.

"O, dear!" he squeaked, forcibly pulling Collins' shoulder. Collins snatched a look behind him. Pink was not to be seen and the old lady was pointing panic-stricken to the rear. Collins set his brake.

"What's the matter?" he evilly said, dropping the wheel.

Not too heavily Chan Kow brought down the butt of his American pistol.

CHAPTER XXVI

A SELF-DISCOVERY

BEFORE sunrise, when Paulter leaned with a hand on the post of the pergola, a dull and dogged figure in a cap and overcoat, there was a sound on the stairs. He slid to fill the doorway.

"It's I," Violet Marr tremulously said, from the half-light at the bottom step. Paulter let her push aside the obstructing table and pick up the pile of unsteady books that fell as he had arranged them to. His haggardness kept her eyes averted. If he did not see that she, too, had not slept, that now she sought from him the sympathetic word, the acknowledgment of what she was sacrificing in peace for him, she laid it to his discomfort, which in turn she laid upon her daughter.

"You go down and buy me some cigars and some coffee and some whiskey," he pointed to her, hoarsely voiced. "I'm awake. She don't take that kind of a rise out of me." His tone swept her to obey. Her fingers trembled with her hat. She sought another hat pin, flustered by his contemptuous impatience.

"Say, how old are you?" he groaned at last. She raised her handkerchief.

"I was fifty years old yesterday," her tearfulness exasperated him. "No one thought of it."

"Well, you act like you was ninety," he waved. "Get a move on."

She forewent the hat pin. She faded from the house, pale under her gray hat, slight and purposeless of mien. He spat from the veranda.

"You act *as if* you was ninety," he corrected himself, aloud, with a glance at the corner that hid Ethel's window. To have heard would have carried her back to her first knowledge of him. She had undertaken the reformation of his speech, of his outlook as to many things, forgetting his maturity and accepting his plausible manner. In an episode of which her beauty had been the exciting cause her disillusionment had come with sudden horror to a girl of sixteen. But she had never told her mother; it seemed, too, possible, that her ears, her understanding, had played her false. Out of the repugnant aloofness that never afterward quit her his sentimental view had grown, increasing as time added to her mystery. Her generosity to him had never been tinged with romance, but for Paulter it was impossible to believe that. He had continued to visit the house on the hill, under Violet Marr's plea that they were spiritualizing him. Why she was attached to him he could not have guessed if his mind had owned an average habit of introspection, but the fact comforted his pride. In her married youth a sea captain's wife had been offered opportunities for aban-

donment, but her vital content was strangely assorted. From her husband she never had had the absolute domination she could have wished for. He desperately had striven to foster her will, her self-reliance. Arthur Paulter had come into her life when she was forty-six. His ascendancy was without conscience; she surrendered her rights of volition in exchange for a sense of rest that all her life she had awaited; passion was dead, and to her it seemed that she gave him nothing in exchange. It was enough for Paulter that she kept him within reach of her daughter.

He went in and sat astride of the end of the sofa. Soon he would be able to revive himself. His tendency to collapse on the soft surface so near at hand—that was what Ethel was playing for. He jumped up and paced the veranda again, muttering ironies on the old woman's slowness. The sun brought warmth. He threw off his overcoat and then his coat, to enjoy that freedom in shirt-sleeves which to him meant home. He had denied himself this since he had come here, and now he looked upon such denial as a weakness. He would congratulate Ethel on a pleasant night when she came down. With coffee and tobacco, for which she was accustomed to no equivalent, he could stay on end for a week of days and nights, if need be. During the hour before to-morrow's dawn he should not be able to prevent her from following him up the mountain, but he would make the pace so hot that, whatso-

ever her purpose was, he should have done with Kendry before she arrived to accomplish it. He had her hooked; let her thresh the waters.

In her room Ethel stared at the wooden ceiling. In the first blank moments her face was like the one that had looked down on Kendry, questioning the forces his unconscious form had been the first to stir within her. If instead of letting this new room go in its intrinsic ugliness, as she had let the one go on the hill, she had been at pains to stamp herself on it, in the furniture, the colors, she did not trace her reason for that to what Kendry might be expected to fancy her doing. But a glance about her brought him to her mind and set on her face the altered expression he had caused to write itself there.

She felt for the key of her room and for the pistol under her pillow. The night light burned near her window, the sign, for Paulter, of a sleepless vigil in the hope of escape. Her khaki suit, her high boots, lay rolled in her golf cape and tied in a sheet, with a laundry list pinned to it. It was her first deception where deception had been expected of her for weeks. It made her flush, avoiding her eyes in the mirror while she combed out the heavy braids and arranged her hair with severe compactness that would suit a hooded head plunging through dense chaparral. Her muscles played beneath the roundness of her arms. Her blood bounded more anxiously under her translucent skin. She took no pleasure in the full modeling of her throat

and cheek, in the firmness, beneath sheer fabric, of a bust from whose quarter-round her garment fell in a straight line to her feet. The man below was cursing the absence of her mother. It was her slimness, her comparative feebleness of bone she saw in the glass. The man was a savage. The pistol frightened her. She hid it in the bag she was accustomed to carry at her belt.

Her dressing as she had dressed the night before suggested an excursion no farther than the garden. The open throat was grateful to the expectancy that began to oppress her.

Paulter's cigar had not waited for his breakfast. She heard him toss a condescending word to her mother. He locked the front door, braced to a show of freshness. Ethel passed him with half-closed eyes, letting her bundle drop where it might on the floor. She sighed and leaned with her forehead touching the window pane. He kicked the bundle, but it was her attitude of weariness that preoccupied him.

"Little shy on a night's sleep?" he blew a cloud toward her. She came again past him, without acknowledging his presence. One understood, she was saying to herself, to what ignominious depths of duplicity women were brought by the forms of tyranny. She took up the unopened newspaper and sank into the armchair. While he settled himself on the sofa close by she gazed at the print without reading, until her eye caught the name of Collins in a headline. It

was a name from that region in which Paulter did things he was never voluble about. The brief dispatch, inserted on an after page, told of Collins being discovered long after midnight by the sheriff of Marin County, hog-bound and in a stupor at the sheriff's door. The woman who had thundered on the panels had whisked into thin air in an automobile—the impression that she was a woman had been helped by her having carried away a mud-guard against a tree-box at the corner of the street. Collins, recovering, had announced that he would turn state's evidence, confessing to his career as a counterfeiter, and incriminating persons—the sheriff did not offer their names for publicity—to whom Collins laid his discomfiture.

It was news that might prove too stimulating to him whose eyes inclined to droop. She let her own lids sleepily close, then opened them as if determined not to drowse. She was aware of a smile flickering about Paulter's thin lips through the haze of smoke. If he responded to her generous yawn it was by a distension of his nostrils, as he brought his feet to a level with his head. She let her cheek turn to the corner of the chair back. From a deep sigh the movement of her bosom changed to a light heaving. Her mother walked on tiptoe; the kettle sang in the kitchen. Paulter gave a start and resumed his cigar.

"It's so stuffy," the girl murmured, without opening her eyes. She heard her mother trying to open the farthest window without their hearing her. Presently

she heard a sound in Paulter's nostrils. Her mother stole about drawing the shades, then the stars gave evidence of her retirement above. A blue-jay harshly reinforced the morning chorus of birds against the silence of the redwoods. There came the unpleasant odor of an extinguished cigar.

She took off her weight on the arms of her chair. She slid along by the wall, where the floor creaked least, and came out of the house by the window.

A hundred yards away in a tangle of hazel and wild honeysuckle, a little down the incline off the road, she could have heard his tread on the veranda, his burst of rage. She laced her boots in peace, recovering her breath, gaining in spirit with this first success. She was free, but Paulter was recuperating. The butcher's boy came driving up in his two-wheeled cart. The road was on a ridge that ran south from the mountain and abruptly finished at the joint debouchment of the two cañons the ridge divided. Her smile, her hair with the dry leaves caught in it, her jaunty skirt and the shapeliness of pliant leather at her ankles, made the boy her blushing servitor. He had her at his side while he sped his horse down the hill in keeping with the manliness swelling in his bosom. As they went the number of dwellings increased. Ethel stopped the baker and bought bread.

"You'll find Mr. Paulter asleep in the living room," she said. "Please knock on the window and tell him I asked you to." The butcher's boy waited to see her

fly bareheaded down a path, her belt bag in hand, her cape dangling from its shoulder straps. She had asked him casually about the trail on the opposite ridge. He resumed his upward journey, glowing with memory. For her the running, after a night behind shut panes was agreeable to the lungs. She crossed the stream. The "commuters" who took the first morning train to the city saw her among tree trunks, marching up over dead leaves. Above where they lived the slopes were barren, save for the grass. The cattle of a passed period, cropping it on rain-soaked soil, had cut the incline into close, narrow terraces. At the top were trees again, and she looked across the cañon to the road she had driven on. Her heart beat evenly and her color gloried. All the clocks in the world were ticking the time between now and to-morrow's dawn, and to be leading Paulter on, making him expend himself, caused her teeth to shut and her fists to clench. The butcher's boy, visible through gaps in the opposite foliage, was driving fast again, with a man whose shoulders crowded him, whose compulsion made him pale with angry fear. She swung the scarlet side of her cape to catch their eyes. She moved as if to keep along the ridge where she was until it joined the steeper ascents of the mountain, more than an hour to the north. Paulter plunged down the path in pursuit of her, as she had wished.

Under cover of a ravine presently she, too, descended, but at an avoiding angle. It brought her

up through the dense redwoods on her own side of the cañon, leisurely to her mother's door.

"You've spoiled it," her mother said, not without belief that in this return she had cause for triumphing. "He would have slept. I put bromide in his coffee. He believes you've gone to meet *him*. He's grown desperate. You'll have to get down on your knees to him."

Her ineffectualness brought a flash of color to her cheek. Ethel was pointing through the window, across the cañon, to the figure that hastened northward on the ridge.

"He thinks I've kept behind the trees, mother. I'm trying to tire him out, on account of to-morrow. Tell him that if you like. He won't believe it. You don't believe it. I have made it my first principle to be frank with you, but you think I have an appointment to-day with Mr. Kendry. You've ceased to trust me, and I can't live with you. It's an odious happening."

Her mother laid a hand on the newel-post. She tried for once to keep fixed upon her daughter's eyes.

"There's something I don't know," she huskily began, her voice mounting, "and that means that if you do go away, some day you'll want to come back. You'll want to shiver behind your mother and tell her how you hate that man."

The eyes had widened and intensified. They left to Violet Marr no resource but tears. Their effect was unexpected.

"Mother," the girl trembled, "it isn't your best self I'm going from. If ever you're alone and you want me, I'll come. Won't you kiss me?"

Her mother bowed upon the newel-post, wet-eyed, but not sobbing. The girl looked about at the long-familiar articles they had brought to this pleasanter place. There were gifts from her mother, relics of her father, things that her baby fingers had reached for. The portrait of her father was on the wall; under it were the ashes of Paulter's cigar, his hat, and his blackthorn stick. She remembered another door, another sunlight, out into which she had seen her father go, smiling at his daughter's tears.

"Mother?" she broke.

That strange half-smile played about her mother's mouth. Without a glance Violet Marr mounted the stairs. There came the sound of her door locking.

The girl went out to the veranda and looked over to the city. It glittered, awaiting her beauty, her slender purse, for what it could wring out of her or for what it must yield to her. Perhaps it would nourish her rather kindly, in the terms of the commonplace, the unimaginative, the dull grind of the unaspiring. The city was not the mountain. After she had sacrificed on the mountain—her pride, her strength, her reckless presence at the moment when these men should meet, the city would take her and the mountain never again know her in its intimate way of yore. If her father had lived it would have been different; he would

have made himself live on in her; she would have been the first consideration in his life. She straightened. He should survive in her. Somewhere in the mid-seas he had gone down, unrecorded, untraced. It was not necessary for his daughter to be told how his blue eyes had faced the end. They were like her eyes; the situation was a little different, but she would try, as he had confronted merciful death, to confront the greater agony of life. She hurried on her predetermined course.

Chan Kow's answer awaited her at the post office: "*There are things which must be left to Fate. This is one of them.*" It failed to echo his prophetic linking of her name with Mr. Kendry's. It sounded to her like the first of more than one farewell. She turned again toward the mountain, this time by the westward cañon, which would lead her to where Paulter would expect to find her, and bring her there before him. In two hours she sat on the western summit, a little fatigued, none inspirited. She was prepared to do so much, to do it so intensely, from motives which, most of all to Kendry, would seem so insufficient. If she rushed in, if nothing in the working out of the event to-morrow seemed to justify her presence, how could she give it dignity in his eyes. She had been going to justify it by a lofty reference to the idea, to his value to humanity, to her obsession that he must survive. She still could frame the words, but would they be less than hypocrisy?

Through the chaparral she could see to a path that forked and encircled the rounded summit, then became one again on the seaward side. Where she looked, Paulter, if he continued his fancied pursuit of her, would pass. A mile beyond stood the lone tree, where he would go in the hope of finding her with Kendry. No trail led to where she had spread her cape; people who climbed the mountain followed the railroad to the other summit. Perhaps she would wait in vain. But it was the logical thing to do, and, doing it, such a mind as Kendry's would have waited in a kind of peace, she thought, peace such as she could not know.

It was because he could thus intellectually proceed, following the finer instincts, the spiritual way, to wheresoever they might lead, that chance would be his enemy—chance that, by upsetting the calculations of such men, ever had preserved the balance between them and strains like Arthur Paulter's. Kendry would have thought of that, too, and he would have come decided as to his attitude toward death; he would come, in short, knowing himself. That was where he was superior, where she failed. He never would stay unstably contemplating Mary Eastwood; he would examine himself to the last shred and he would discover just the value Mary Eastwood had for him. And in this great commotion approaching to-morrow the hour would strike for Mary Eastwood and for him; souls would unveil. Yet he would not swerve from the trial. He would come, and if he survived

he would hand to Ethel Marr her release from Paulter's baneful shadow; a gift for which not the passionate "I" would await acknowledgment, but which the impersonal "idea" would acclaim as its own satisfaction. The name "Idea" was as hostile as the trees, the high hills, the cold sea at their feet; it echoed from the mountain itself, with the sound of eternity, denying what was of woman's youth, of her beauty, of her bounding blood. She must give thanks to him, changeless of color, quiverless of lip. She must go on, alone. He never fully could have respected her. There were things about Mary Eastwood that a lifetime would prove, but Mary Eastwood never could have known such a man as Arthur Paulter; never could have stood stroking his cheek in fear that he would kill some one; never could have sat alone on a mountain-top, armed with his own dreadful gift against what his unbridled instincts might lead him to, in a solitude, under a passion that so degraded her. Ethel thrust her hand to part the bushes. The figure that advanced around the bend was at a glance not Paulter. It was too obviously of another school. It was clad in the color of the rocks. It swung strongly, full of purpose, full of grace, deep in thought. Did it go to meet its death? She paled; she rose, then crouched, then rose again, her hand toward it. It passed, erect, light of foot, firm of mouth. She could not call to it. It disappeared.

Why had she not been honest with herself? Why

could she not go to the event in the abandonment to truth where lay the one solace, the one dignity.

"I do, I do," she whispered the words on the breeze. They were gone and the breeze never would give them back. Her head bowed on her knees. She tossed her hands from her eyes, stumbling up. But there was no goal—the mountain at last had turned against her. There was only the figure of another man, rounding the bend on hasty feet, turning to look behind him, tightening an evil mouth she knew too well, going with stealth and with his hand in the pocket of his coat. He would not look up to the waving of her cape; she could not break fast enough down through that dense growth to stop him. She tore open the bag at her belt. The explosion of that pistol, pointed at the ground, seemed to shake the skies. The man jumped and whirled; he caught at last her moving figure on the sky-line.

Down on the other fork of the trail from the one Kendry had taken she waited till she knew that Paulter, struggling through the brush, had sighted her. She broke a sapling to mark her flight down the steep beyond—away from the direction Kendry had taken, through a battling, pathless tangle, over uncertain stones and hollow pitfalls hidden by nets of fallen leaves on fallen branchlets. The sapling still quivered when Paulter leaped exultingly across the trail. He heard her crashing through tough scrubby oaks, interlocking redwood shoots and clumps of ceanothus; hood on

head she could not match his carelessness of torn skin, and, somewhere beyond, he pictured Kendry slackening his speed to hers. He thought he saw through Kendry's game, now that he had read the newspaper some one had dropped off the mountain train. Kendry had arranged the capture of Collins, and they would try to hold Paulter, if not on a charge, then as a witness, so that Paulter would fail to appear at dawn to-morrow. Kendry hadn't calculated on what was happening now! Paulter remembered how once before he had lost her, because his own crackling of dry brush had drowned hers. He made pauses; they sent her ahead, but his ears stood him in turn. He hated the accursed tangle and it hated him, but a mere woman could not fight it as he was fighting. He came to a nearly sheer descent of many feet, the face of the rock hung with the exposed roots of the fringe of shrubs above, the bottom obscured by tall redwoods. There were sounds down there—she had known a quicker way, but that would not change the end, so long as he had ears. He slid down with stones clattering about his head; he would teach them better shooting than that effort of theirs on the summit. The sounds became confused, nearer, a slow beating as if with a heavy stick against something impassable, as if one of them was entangled and frantically sought to be free. He hastened along the bottom, gloating, framing his speech, glorifying his prowess. The face of the wall ran higher. As he came into a clear space

a heavy stone crashed from above and made that sound against a redwood bough. She had not descended. She had walked along, hurling down the stones. She was alone. Now he heard her quick retreat up toward the trail and back toward whence he had been coming when he discovered her. Paulter threw himself down.

"All right," he presently tossed his defeat from him. "If he isn't there to-morrow, I'll go to where he is. Hand 'em out one little white chip; I'll cash in some red ones."

He lay panting on his back. He was not going to risk returning to the house—not until he had read another day's newspaper about the confession of Collins. The sun was warm, the spot was sheltered from the wind. He put the newspaper over his face.

CHAPTER XXVII

A MIND AND A PAIR OF PISTOLS

KENDRY had paused at the foot of another face of rock high on the mountain's southern side, against which the sun made his shadow more noticeable than himself, sending up in the reflected warmth about his feet the bouquet of a mid-California day—the mixture of mints, of *yerba santa*, of immortelles and of other faintly perfumed leaves and flowers. Lizards basked and darted in the heat radiating between his eyes and the Pacific, the high hills, the city whose gray pall drifted inland on a lessening breeze. Often he had rejoiced in these savors, this glittering path of freights toward the roofs and spires which partly showed behind the inner headlands of the Gate. The region lays on men of every race, every mold, its bright allurements. If elsewhere the scenes of men's works more finished, more restrained, had aided his discriminations, they never had abated the loyalty, the poetic optimism which glowed on his viewing that empire of summits fronting to the changeful sea. He was under the spell perhaps for the last time; he was perhaps to leave it as the hero of a poor sensational episode, tickling the minds of the majority; his one contribution to the story of

a fair haven that waited for spirits schooled like his to deliver it from a degree of self-debasement.

In the kind of mortal danger he went forward to, men of least imagination seek a fillip otherwise denied them; faint ecstatic beings flee from it, and only men of fancy spiritually deep approach it with full forethought and full courage. Not but that Kendry was approaching death in a stir of all his faculties, while he stood with the liveliness of youth responding to the ennerving dryness of the air and the subtle invitation of the flowers. Death passed before him in the varied meanings mankind had made for it, out of fear, through credulity, into faith. To him the fear of after-death, and its superstructure of faith in the promise of eternal life, had been the index of the Christian Era, and the decline in the value of that promise pointed to greater peace on earth and to the greater majesty of man.

The weight of the promise had been its negation of the alleged terrors of death. Before this negation, this *summum bonum*, western civilization wearily had laid down the burden of natural thought, and before this closed gate the multitude had rested throughout centuries. To occasional querulous voices the promise repeated itself in even terms. It was the artificial stopping point, the mortal error, in a world of unfathomed possibilities of spiritual extension. For one who bound his eyes with no self-consecrated fillet and for whom the instinct to evolve existed as forcibly as the

instinct to avoid death, the promise of eternal happiness, offered to the spirit through the mind, had the value of that which the mind cannot conceive. John Kendry could not imagine light which makes no shadow, nor actual peace except from actual threat of pain. The peace which passes the understanding passed for him into the negation of sentient being.

If to-day this did not decrease a young man's willingness to die, though it did not touch on his will to meet the issue, it heightened his joy in his world, climbing down from the warm rock through the delicate air of manzanita blossoms, of lilac-like blooms of the ceanothus. It strengthened his hope for the world he knew, when all the incantations wasted upon space should be translated into deeds for its betterment. The far perspective of the hills aided a perspective of humanity congenial to his soul. The world was not asleep but awakening. As ever, the ferment was in the masses, less in answer to the shouting of the prophets than to the slow digestion of centuries of experience. At length the monster had ceased to accept specific mortal ills in meek exchange for vague promises beyond the grave. On the one side stood the spirit of truth and democracy, and all the extensions of democracy most often grouped under the term socialism; on the other side stood empiricism, aristocracy, plutocracy, and the machineries of the allied faiths. Everywhere the monster moved against these

old forms of its own nourishing, often obtusely, often without mercy, yet always under the same new instinct for a better life on earth—a life which should stand to that of the present inversely as the superstitious domination of the middle ages stood to spiritual freedom. This, then, was the deep rumble of the multitude as in harmony with which John Kendry might hope to liken his idea to one of some individual silver bells. To know that harmony released him from the loneliness he had found when he had asked an understanding of the idea from men who, as it happened in his acquaintance, were neither of conscious bell metal nor of the intuitive multitude.

While he thought these things he went over dry ground where the manzanita thickly shaded its roots among which no grass grew. His hobnails grated on the angular pebbles and startled a little turquoise snake. The soil changed from yellow to green, the vegetation became lower and sparse and he dug his heels into the loose earth of a steep bank and came down on to a road that wound to seaward, in and out of folds, past springs, and into a strangely altered meadow where flourished ancient yews and twisted bays, and the song-sparrow did not wait for the evening hours, but sang for the joy of living while life ran.

But birds were birds and men were men, he mused, and the building of nests: here were a man's foot-prints in the sand the winter rains had brought upon the road, and those of a woman; any man and any

woman walking toward the sea's horizon, and perhaps singing, even as the birds! Presently the footprints were joined by those of a child, as if it had been set down from the man's shoulder. There was the balance on heels, the dart across to a clump of yellow poppies; there was the joyful skip to join the others, the sudden discovery of the soft surface near a waterway into which the feet had sunk, to be snatched back to drier ground and to blithely wind, trailing a stick, to where the small fingers had left their marks in the scooping up of the sand.

It was this he was to forego, Kendry said to himself, as the sea came into nearer view and as the four grown footprints assembled where the child had been lifted back to shoulder. He marveled at how little he ever had thought of man in his capacity of father. He had let it lie over invisible beyond marriage. And it was the one certain approach to immortality life had to show. It was the one avenue by which man's virtue, his experience, his essence, lingered after him. If it lingered in combination with another strain it was itself such a combination, and in the union all romance was exalted, all egoism qualified. Why was it not enough? Why was it not the answer to the thirst for conscious endlessness? Why was it not noblest to accept the extinction of one's known selfish entity, rejoicing in and glorifying posterity? Posterity! The word glowed. To live for posterity, to have been lived for by ancestry! To have lived in ancestry, and in

posterity still to live; posterity and ancestry wherein all men were blood brothers and the self-seeking of the individual soul, that fretted over the little time, the little space that bound it, was cast aside on account of its morbidity! To build, to beautify, to preserve, not for the covetous moments of one's own evanescence, but for all the living world to come! It asked no strangling of the instinct for thought; it was founded on human experience, human intelligence; it crowned the strongest of human instincts and raised it out of centuries of hypocritical reproach; it extended human romance through marriage, through maturity, through old age; sweetly and without strain it brought together all human sympathy and understanding; it made infinite the possible extension of human activities; it did all this and asked for no credulity, for no especial temperament, no subversion of instinct, no symbol, because it began with the first principle of life, beside whose antiquity all beliefs and all observances were but flaws on the surface of the deep.

Kendry smiled a little, his hands tapping the pistols in his breast pockets. What was in the mind of Paulter at this moment, Paulter who would have dug the shores for gold till the sea swallowed him up; who would have corrupted public authority till anarchy destroyed him; could have worshiped himself until he was immolated in the service of his egotism? Kendry drew an agreeable breath of the air from the sea. He tapped his boot with a willow switch. There was a

difference between chance and odds. He intended that the odds should be in his favor. He gave up his mind to the details of a violent demise, which should be not his, but Paulter's.

The road curved out of the last sheltered hollows to the treeless slopes that descended steeply to the shores. He passed a prosaic cattle ranch and a deserted summer camping resort, and came out upon a broad sandpit paralleling the shore for some miles. He became an unnoticeable figure on it, along with the huge flotsam of timber rafts and the nimble sand-peeps. He had been neither a duffer nor a crack shot; he never had met anything he wanted to kill so much as he wanted its living acquaintance. He set up a bottle on a stick where the still sea lapped the sands. After his seven bullets had been sent at it, the bottle remained intact. Something in the pull of his finger, the tension of his breath, deflected his aim. He spent two hours trying to disregard his breathing and to conquer the deflection. There was in the calm of a successful aim a seeming denial of the passion that should justify killing a man. It was difficult to accord to the sharpness of the explosion its irrelevancy. He made a target something of a man's figure, and ran at it over obstacles, firing as he went. There was a point from which he could not miss; it was perhaps a question of his reaching that point in the face of Paulter's fire. He sat counting the possible dangers, the possible developments, till the sun sank into the

clouds of the horizon. No optimism had resulted. It was not odds; it still was chance.

He ate and started up the incline again, now directly in the line of the rendezvous, where he planned to secure the advantage of the ground. He took the ascent slowly, saving all strength. At the top the ground-robin scuttled beneath the brush, the meadow-lark called from a dead tree; the sense of eventide, the dying of the breeze, the cow motionless beyond a fence, the cooler smell of the grass, the flat glazed surface of the sea, the gathering gloom to eastward, these weighed on the mind of a man who might not see the fullness of another morning. The shadows of the trees went long upon the upper meadows. He crossed their park-like stretches where the redwood and the bay, happily not contending in a crowd for light, spread their branches far aground. He passed a grove of madroños large and small, where the red disc on the horizon heightened the ochre surface of the trunks and made, with its flood of contrasted color, its vivid setting off of yellow bough and bottle-green leaf, its irregularity of all the shapes of branch and twig, a still strange mystery of which the essence was unanswered loneliness. He tried to dwell upon the beauty of the rolling hollows, their smooth verdure and the setting of vigorous, perfect trees. But the sun dropped out of the frame. A rabbit ran away and paused, obscurely cocking its ears. The song-sparrow ceased. The sea was lost behind the rises

and the hollows, and the sky was filling with high vapors shutting away the faint stars. In that wheeling of the birds of dusk, that alternate regular chirp of the crickets far and near, were the symbols of solitude, of the mind's night, of the endless round while men struggled to change the world, and from the struggle suddenly passed into the inexplicable Silence.

It formed in him a wish that was inconsistent, yet would not down; that for a while there might be some one with him. It was not the occasional crackling of dry leaves, the unexpected stirrings of the air, that chilled him. It was a sense of a new want, of an incompleteness, of an unexpressedness, to which only the darkness echoed. It led him back to Mary Eastwood's door. He could have stopped there with her; he could have had his half hour with her, and their future would have been resolved. This would not necessarily have met his present yearning. He figured Mary walking at his side; he could not imagine in what garb, what inner mood. The rustlings in the shadows, the forms the shrubs and fallen trees took on, would have brought her nearer him, disconcerted and, though under his protection, still longing for her lights, her locks and keys, her servants. The stones would have hurt her feet, and she would have shivered in the cooling of the air. He would have reassured her, but it was he himself who needed reassurance, not as to the familiar phenomena of night in the wilderness,

but about himself, in that dimension where the weakness of man equals the strength of woman.

The clouds had thickened and settled. He lost the trail and went on with a woodsman's sense of direction. Forms faded into formlessness, and only the least penetration of the shrouded moon gave line to the tops of groves of trees and of eminences. He came out onto the drier ground again. The far summits dimly ran against the clouds. To the south the city glimmered and took shape out of the darkness, sending a few shimmering reflections into the waters of the bay. He picked his way among boulders and through thickets to where the lone tree stood against the rock. Pistol in hand he climbed down cautiously onto the uneven terrace overhanging a gulf of blackness. He listened long and heard no sound. Evidently he was first and alone. He believed that no one could approach within pistol-shot without being heard.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BEGINNING

UP back of him the outline of the mountain swept, a little blacker than the clouds. Beneath the gulf beyond the less dim surface of the rock the hills and trees and waterways were one in formlessness. The sheltered shelf at the rock's edge, waist deep, was opposite the tops of redwoods through whose foliage the wind gave now and then a sigh against the silence. There he dropped his burden from his back, weary not with travel, nor with foreboding, but with the length of the hours that must pass. He gave himself to groping on each tilted plane, over each crevice with a struggling shrub that should dispute his footing on his way to meet an adversary. He conned the points that would stand out up the slope in the path of his aim, to aid him; he studied the dim contrast he himself would make as a mark against the hillsides, down across the distance, that would be shaded by the morning light beyond them. He imagined his combat till attention lost its edge, and he turned his back on the scene and acknowledged the flaw in that calm neutrality he had expected to perfect.

Rightly, he should be sitting erect, heels over brink,

a finished figure in bronze, symbolically gazing on the reflection of the far clouds above the city. He bowed, a figure of clay; his depression deepened with the slow progress of the hidden stars. Past the walls erected by an intellect the current of his emotions the more violently swept. If he died and Mary Eastwood took half his fortune, he should have served her well. But, in defense against the deadness of the gloomy hours he let himself consider; what as to her if he lived?

That is a familiar phase through which he had passed in Mary's sympathetic company. He had been young, linguistic, capable of world-mindedness, moving toward cosmopolitanism. After two years, when his father's death had called him back to his own country, Kendry had suffered; the cacophony, the foolish haste, the ugliness, the corruption, the thousand vulgarities, the poverty of social life—all loomed upon him in unhappy oppositeness. In his letters to Mary the moment had been of their closest, if still undefined communion. Gradually he had been accustomed—numbed, Mary would have said—to much that first had appalled him. Conditions could differ more than men; a revelation which covered his own country and justified his cosmopolitanism. Amid the din and the prating of self-sufficiency he distinguished the mounting cry for the more agreeable to the eye, the more admirable in social intercourse, and for a public morality. The vastness of the country made the voices seem isolated—if one listened for the ring that meant the deed

behind the word. Social life was invertebrate, and the organization of society singularly deficient in the power and means of veracious self-expression. The cry was the cry of a minority under the despotism of a majority, and he lived in a longitude where men, a little too sleek, are prone to beg the question of public honesty by an appeal to the glorious climate, as with creative pride. But the familiar lines brought him to his restored balance. To youth America, in every field but those of certain arts, meant opportunity. And where, even from a world point of view, the most glorious opportunity lay, the field was least crowded; the fateful fight to rouse responsibility in the sheep whose march to the polls, overfed, underbred, was a pageant for the enemies of democracy. Though to live the mildest of lives in the land of his birth meant that his chances of being maimed or murdered were perhaps three times as great as they were under the effete monarchies: that was part of the price of this greatest of opportunities, and he was willing to pay the whole price.

It brought him to the question how to begin, considering that he was neither "a good fellow" nor perhaps naturally gifted as a leader of men. The answer to that was that any man must shine, at least as an example, whose motives transcend his own aggrandizement and his own times. Extending that, he had framed his idea. He had striven to convert Mary to it.

During the time since his episode with Paulter on the mountain, during his succeeding days of disheartenment—hence of so little importance, yet, except to himself, as if he had dropped like a pebble into the sea he could have wished to convulse—Mary had been an added weight. Now, as he looked across to that crowded precinct where, despite her horror of it, she would have preferred to be, rather than on this rock, he saw that he had converted, not her spirit, but perhaps her heart. He saw that it had been the shadow of this conclusion that had made him put off thinking about her.

If he survived, if he rushed to find her, if he said nothing contrary, they would drift back to Europe—inevitable for Americans when drift they must. Mary would not object to his becoming a man without a country; his matured cosmopolitanism would count, not for a luminous view of the hundred facets of life under the Constitution, but for enjoyment, for diletanteism, for a fussy, unaccountable old age. Against which, even at his feeblest, there would wax the sadness, the regrets of expatriation. The knowledge of this would be Mary's fear, her unexpressed reservation—of ample possibilities for conjugal chafing—that some day he might set sail and grimly become American.

She had accepted the idea with resignation, not with joy. For the idea anything other than enthusiasm was antagonism. That was as clear as the black

form of the horned owl that flapped past him and alighted in the near obscurity.

He thought he had made this discovery without the help of other force. He thought he was self-governed in the medium wherein he was groping. If so, and since he yet could withdraw with honor, though not with fine consistency, why—if he was to withdraw to what would be completer loneliness—did he hasten to light a match, perhaps endangering his life, in order that the letter he had torn open might at last be read?

“Must I protest against this duel—this unspeakable folly with Miss Marr’s friend, when her protest will have been effectual or will have made mine ridiculous? I shall have started for Europe, to be sure of Tuesday’s steamer. There seems no reason for my lingering. The train leaves at 8:30 Wednesday evening. Mother, whom I have not alarmed, wishes me to congratulate you for her, on your remaining an American.

“As ever,

“MARY.”

By this hour Mary’s train would be climbing the Sierra. Another day and still she could have caught the Tuesday steamer. But she had announced herself able to go without waiting to hear the outcome. He stood up, the better to realize his freedom, his lightness. What fell upon his head was the completeness, perhaps the unalterableness, of his isolation, as if the rock was surrounded by depth and darkness and distance through which he never could pass.

They had traveled a stretch of road together; but his destination had been for a life that should exalt

the spirit, though at the cost of pain; hers had been for an escape from responsibility, counting no cost. The owl quavered from its black hiding place: "*Ou-ou; ou-uh-ou—*" as it had hooted to him that night beneath the fog in his pursuit of Ethel Marr.

How magnificently Mary might have taken his view, shared his generosity, brightening Ethel Marr's career! Mary could have dispelled all self-consciousness; he could have handed the situation to her as he had found it; he could have fallen back to the position, not of Miss Marr's chance acquaintance, but of Mary's *ex officio* ally. With all eloquence and assumption of her responsiveness he had pointed the way to Mary, and she had gone straight upon her divergent path. It had left the enterprise blasted. It had left him neither here nor there. It had brought him to the rock, instead of disposing of Paulter by a gradual process in which Kendry would have figured as a force without a name. It had given him a chance to die without the whisper in his ears of other lips: "I understand."

Nothing he could write, he muttered, with a moist hand gripping the rock, would make Ethel understand. Only what he never might be able to do would prove to her that he had not waited here in doubt of his heart, in doubt of the idea, a cargo of flaccidity beached on an undiscovered shore. He was dragging slow chains through the hours. His detachment was as complete as if already he was dead. His young woe was as deep as his unfulfilled ideal had been exalted.

He was seized by a terrifying double-consciousness; the sense of receding from himself, within himself, of looking back on himself, hearing and knowing the thing he was, in pitiful intimacy. The thing moved along the shelf, seeking a stone, anything to silence the hooting of that owl. The thing fussed over its miserable little life, its little theories, its little emotions—one particle flickering one moment in all time, all stellar dust.

“I never have lived,” it groaned.

He had thrust his hand at a shadow, feeling for a stone. The hand had touched what was soft, what was round, what was a fabric. It moved. He exclaimed in his throat. The owl flew off.

“It’s you!” he said. He dropped back against the rock. “Wonderful, wonderful!”

No one else would have answered with silence. He threw himself down near her and held a fold of her cape, taut from her shoulder. He could feel her shoulder rise and fall; he could be sure that she would not dissolve.

“My marvelous good fortune,” his chest hove. She seemed to shake her head.

“If I hadn’t been responsible——”

“No, no—responsive,” he cried. “Responsive—everything.” He could not judge when the dawn would come. “I’ll tell you things presently.” For the moment it was enough to feel the life within her moving the cape.

"The letter was Mary's announcement of her return to Europe," he began. "She foresaw that she would not be necessary to my happiness. I groaned because I possess nothing that is." He could see the outline of her hood. She must have been long kneeling. "How you'll be cramped!"

"My foot's asleep," she half laughed, changing her position. He took up the pull on her cape again, and together they gazed across to where the city lay.

"How shall you like my finished creed?" he presently said. "It's to look upon the beauty of the world and upon what one can do to increase that, not as one who expects to leave the world, but as one who expects to live in it forever. It's to assume that one does live in it forever; either in the posterity of one's own blood, or the posterity of one's example. It's the idea projected, reconciled with mortality. It asks you to be content with such immortality as passes from you into the future of the world. Has it ever come to you like that?"

"What else would content me with being a woman? You've given a woman's answer to all the philosophies in the world."

"It must be the right one. In the end every normal thinker brings his great theory to some woman and lays it in ridiculous little glinting pieces at her feet. He thinks she doesn't know that his circle isn't complete, and she charmingly lets him think so, while the world rolls on and she remains the one unalterable

fact. *Nunc dimittis!* I have talked enough. I shall wade into that American city. It's a swamp of distrust, where men run about trying to sell their liberties at the lowest price. If it were not so—more than I have ever saddened you with—I never should have thought these things so much alone. Those who will give their time and forego their enrichment, trying to redeem it, are a tragic few. I shall be one of them. I shall have lost my critical aloofness, my diffidence with my contemporaries. I shall be in good company; I shall have found my career. So much for one's relations with men. Does the woman approve?"

"Doesn't it follow?" But she heavily sighed. The air stirred the trees and certain wakened birds foretold the dawn.

"Your beauty," he glowed. "It's so marvelously compelling. I have never said so. Often I have dreamt of you. It's a beauty one need not be afraid of. It's not merely youth—it's you. You as you are, as you will remain, just as one would have you, without one flaw. It's a joy to have said so."

The hood turned toward him; she pushed it off her head, and he thought it was because he so well knew her features that he could make out the movement of her lips.

"You said 'compelling'?"

"Overwhelming! So much so that one, held back, asking if it was safe. Then——"

"Is it safe?"

"Gloriously safe."

She was on her knees again, facing him. Her fingers touched his sleeve.

"Do you love to walk in the woods at night?" she said. "When the trees are only forms and the stars are only fires—so simple and still, so convincing. Do you like to go without thinking, without speaking?"

"Ah, yes."

"Only to be primitive—only to live. Wouldn't it refresh your soul? Wouldn't you like once to be irresponsible? Why do you say I am beautiful, you have never known me yet. Look!" She showed him the parted clouds in the west. "It takes that starlight, it takes that solitude—I'm shivering now. It takes the flame, the touch, the madness, to make me beautiful. It's over there," she whispered. "Come, while the night lasts," he groaned. Her warm breath was on his ear, her breast was soft against his shoulder.

"After dawn, after dawn."

"Then it will be hateful day. No, into my beautiful night. Come."

"To-morrow night. I shall live. To-morrow night."

He could have crushed her for standing off from him. But she was holding out her arms. He could see the glorious confusion of her hair.

"To-night is the only night in the world. I shall be truly beautiful. I shall not think; I shall not speak;

I shall not care. I shall only live—live, for once. Ah, come!”

“God!” he jumped up to her. “I can’t come! I won’t come! That is a greater triumph for you than if I had.”

She buried her head in her cape on the edge of the terrace.

“If I *had* been beautiful! If what you said *were* true!”

At his movement she stood up and away from him.

“I’ve seen what you have in your hand,” he advanced. “You must give it to me.”

Her free palm thrust him back with a force he could not have guessed. She cried out, in fear that she had spun him over into space, then fled from him. He caught her elbows, taxed to all his power. Youth could not withstand her strong perfection palpitating in his arms.

“I’ve tried to let you go without one touch from me,” he said. “I love you, I’ve said it. It’s because I love you less.”

“It’s because you love me more. Come—come with me—what else matters! Ah, let go my hand,” she sobbed. He threw her pistol into the abyss.

“You are mine. You must do as I say. You must let chance decide. You must go.” He set her free. He had not kissed her. It was at the fearful edge of the rock he caught her again and shook her with his trembling. “No, no!” he shuddered, hard upon her

lips. When he let those speak her arms were stifling him.

"See if you can break my hold," she threatened. "I love you and I will not go. Promise that I stay."

Out of her visible eyes flamed that which made him colossal.

"Where you were, where you won't be seen," he whispered.

She let him lead her there, folding her cape about her. The trees were resolving from the shades. The morning star stood faintly in the open west. Birds flew and called. The eastern hills rose up against the broken clouds.

They waited, sitting together, her chin upon his shoulder. His jaw set firmer while she drank him in with frightened eyes. Her fingers stole over his face, in the full dawn where no man's footstep echoed, softly touching the lines that so had sunk into her young heart when first she had begged him back to life on that mountain-side. Would he go once more into the silence forever. She shuddered. The eastern hills were the edge of a fiery sword. He turned to her. Morning—morning, amber light upon her hair! They thought they heard a step.

Her fingers quivered on his shoulder.

"O God—we still—still can go."

"Listen!"

The steps were mechanical, scuffling over the gravel

of the trail. It was as if they had lost their way in the deep dark of that other cañon; as if doggedly at last they nevertheless came to their goal. They left the trail and became a swish in the bushes. Kendry tore off her hands and leaped away.

"If you reach out I shall maim your hand," he held up the butt of his pistol. She bowed upon her knees. He sprang to the rock.

"Halt!" he cried, to the bloodshot eyes.

She was at one side, a scarlet patch, erect.

"I love him!"

The dry lips spat at her the venom of a caitiff soul. He was shooting, not at Kendry, but at Ethel. Kendry had tripped; all plans had come to naught. He fired from his side, slowly, without the movement of an eye. Paulter crouched behind a shrub. The smoke drifted away from his pistol. The pistol was all that Kendry could see.

"Jack?"

"Obey—obey!" he waved her back.

The pistol did not turn to cover him as he approached. The arm was caught in the stiff fork of the manzanita.

"My Jack!"

He came back to her.

"It's very complete—it's horrible. Give me your cape." He motioned her by another way to leave the rock. Presently he returned, coatless, pale.

"It's his tragedy. We——"

He took her fingers from her arm. Some blood was coloring her sleeve.

"It's just a little—just enough," she smiled to him.

They came along, hand in hand, her arm in a tourniquet of his making, to the last level stretch of the trail, where they saw over the broad distance. Flowers looked up to them; birds started from their feet. Beyond lay the world.

"You—you are the idea," he held her.

"Ah, no, you—you."

He pointed far to where the sun glinted on the windows of the city.

"We will be the idea."

So they went down together toward the city built on sand, where most men built with sand and saw through sand, and many slaved and some slew for sand. For those men's souls were mostly as sand—which, swirled aloft by a gust of prosperity, takes the hollow form of its trivial moment, then falls to shapelessness, sand upon sand.

But she was the true fruit of a land of sunshine and of flowers, and he was the vindicating product of its abundance and of its gold. For them life stood forth in a glorious meaning, and they went down patiently to build, out of youth, out of love, out of the idea, what should have the dignity of the mountain that swept the sky to northward—majestic, clear, resplendent in the morning.

THE END

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